



Spurgeon's Sermons

The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit

By Rev. C. H. Spurgeon

Volume VII



Preached primarily at
Exeter Hall, Strand, and
the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington
1860 – 1861

SPURGEON'S SERMONS

VOLUME VII

THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

BY

CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON

(1834 – 1892)

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THESE SERMONS WERE PREACHED BEFORE
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THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT, VOL. VII

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To
THE ONE GOD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH,
IN THE TRINITY OF HIS SACRED PERSONS,
BE ALL HONOUR AND GLORY,
WORLD WITHOUT END,
AMEN.

TO THE GLORIOUS FATHER,
AS THE COVENANT GOD OF ISRAEL;

TO THE GRACIOUS SON,
THE REDEEMER OF HIS PEOPLE;

TO THE HOLY GHOST,
THE AUTHOR OF SANCTIFICATION;

BE EVERLASTING PRAISE FOR THAT GOSPEL OF
THE FREE GRACE OF GOD,
HEREIN PROCLAIMED UNTO MEN.

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PREFACE

THE SEVENTH yearly volume of Sermons is sent forth to the world with the Author's heartiest thanksgivings, and sincerest prayers. Eight years of public ministry amid thronging multitudes supply the most blessed recollections. The faithfulness of God, the fellowship of Christ, the comforts of the Spirit, the power of prayer, the prevalence of faith, the force of truth, the glory of the gospel, and other kindred heaven-born truths have received plentiful illustrations in our experience, for which we would render our joyous praise. Preserved in Jesus amid daily temptations, supplied with strength for incessant labors, guided through singular difficulties, and comforted under ferocious attacks, we can sing unto the Lord who has been at our right hand in every time of need. The All-sufficiency of God we have joyously proved, while the insufficiency of the creature we have painfully felt. Vain is the help of man, but glorious is the right arm of the Most High!

The reader will frequently be compelled to observe the imperfections and infirmities of the preacher as they show themselves in these hasty productions, but if he is taught of God, this will only cause him the more fully to acknowledge the grace and power of our glorious Lord, who works by feeble means, and makes the weakness of the instrument a foil to set forth more clearly the glory of the great worker. In our case, no flesh has reason to glory. What the Lord has worked cannot in this instance be ascribed to human learning, position, influence, title, family, or refinement. Unaided by any of these things, the country-lad preached as the Spirit gave him utterance, and as a London pastor he desires to do the same. Power belongs unto

God; as for mortal might, what does it? There at Your altar, O Lord, let all honor and glory be laid! We are Your debtors immersed in debt, and we can give You nothing but our love, and even the power to offer this we must first of all receive at Your hands!

These discourses are purely extempore, and although reported with singular accuracy, as there are no manuscripts with which to compare the report, errors will creep in. The hasty manner of the getting out of the sermons must again excuse the sadly numerous errors. As to the preacher's style, he who expects elaboration and exact accuracy in an extempore discourse, and especially in a report printed the next day, and published the next, deserves to be disappointed. Such as they are, we send them forth; we wish they could be revised and improved, but as this cannot be done, we issue them as best we can.

In the matter of gospel doctrine, we trust no reader will perceive any variation. No new gospel have we aimed to declare. More faith is needed, but not a new creed; a firmer confidence, but not a better covenant; a stronger trust, but not a more solid foundation. Developments, discoveries, and theorizing, we are content to leave to those who, having never tasted the old wine, are naturally thirsty for the new. Our colors are nailed to the mast, and in doctrine we take for our motto, "*Semper idem.*" We are foolish enough, as the new divines would say, to be content with the old theology, and even to believe it incapable of improvement. We do not think the "Essays and Reviews" an advance upon Paul and Peter; nor do we rank Messrs. Maurice, Kingsley, and others of the cloudy schools, with Luther and Calvin. Pestilent heresies advocated by cunning and crafty men, who lay in wait to deceive, are endeavoring to sap the foundations of all our churches, and our only safety lies in adhering tenaciously to the old truth, and seeking a fresh

baptism of the Holy Spirit, that the life of God may be continued in our midst. "Hold fast the form of sound words."

During the past year, 200,000 copies of our sermons have been presented to the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford. A selection having been made of those which touched the more vital points of faith and godliness, the sermons were made up into volumes; and, as far as possible, all tutors, heads of houses and students, received a copy. Much prayer has been offered that their perusal may be blessed to the eternal benefit of our land. Not for any sectarian end, but solely to promote the conversion of men, these sermons were purchased and distributed by one who is content in obscurity to be all unknown, and who will probably regret that any public allusion is made to his generous deed. Such an act has hardly been precedent in the history of literature, and we could not resist the temptation to record it. In another quarter, a similar distribution is contemplated—may we affectionately beg for the prayers of all who have profited by the sermons in any measure, that God may smile upon this great work, and get honor unto Himself thereby!

In addition to former French, Welsh, Dutch, German, and Swedish issues, a new translation has been prepared for the great German nations, and a large edition will be ready for the famous Leipzig book fair. O Spirit of God, go with the Word and make it mighty to win souls!

The sermon, "None but Jesus," has been translated for the Aborigines of New Zealand, and some thousands have been distributed. The reading of this sermon in Auckland, New Zealand, has led to several conversions among Europeans and natives.

Selections of plain discourses have been sent out to the Bahamas, Bermudas, and other West Indian Islands, for the use

of the lay preachers, and thus another sphere of usefulness has been opened to us.

The “Era,” and other American newspapers, continue to reprint the weekly sermon, and even in the far West, the smaller journals find it convenient to fill up their columns with these discourses, and thus they are enabled to journey wherever the press has power. In our own country, the various bookhawking societies find that the sermons occupy a prominent place in the list of periodicals. In rural districts they are read from the pulpits of many chapels, and in the cottage-meetings of the poor. At the sick bed they minister comfort, and in the street they teach of Christ, the sinner’s only hope.

According to custom, for the guidance of gratuitous distribution, we would indicate those discourses whose usefulness has come under our own notice.

Several persons have joined the Church who profess to have found Christ, or to have been savingly impressed with a sense of sin, through those entitled—“First Resurrection,” “None but Jesus,” “Scourge for Slumbering Souls,” “The Broken Column,” and “God’s First Words to the First Sinner.” “Plenteous Redemption” was delivered some time ago, although it appears in this volume; during the period which has elapsed since its delivery, several persons have mentioned it as having been the means of their conversion.

Our heart has been made glad by many written and personal communications from souls set at joyous liberty, or otherwise blessed by reading and hearing the sermons, “Wailing of Risca,” “Shield of Faith,” “Intercessory Prayer,” “The Interest of Christ and His People in Each Other,” “Cleansing of the Leper,” and “Christ the Propitiation.”

The present volume is larger than usual, because it includes the Opening Services of the Tabernacle, and runs on to the close of the year. Next year, with a larger type, we hope not

only to gratify our reader's eyes, but to obtain his aid for an increased circulation.

May grace, mercy, and peace, be with the whole Israel of God! Reader, this is the earnest prayer of,

**Yours ever truly,
C. H. Spurgeon
*DECEMBER 1861.***

A DEFENSE OF CALVINISM

**Note: This message is from C. H. Spurgeon's
Autobiography, Volume I**

IT IS A GREAT THING to begin the Christian life by believing good solid doctrine. Some people have received 20 different “gospels” in as many years. How many more they will accept before they get to their journey’s end, it would be difficult to predict. I thank God that He early taught me the gospel, and I have been so perfectly satisfied with it, that I do not want to know any other. Constant change of creed is sure loss; if a tree has to be taken up two or three times a year, you will not need to build a very large loft in which to store the apples! When people are always shifting their doctrinal principles, they are not likely to bring forth much fruit to the glory of God. It is good for young believers to begin with a firm hold upon those great fundamental doctrines which the Lord has taught in His Word; why if I believed what some preach about the temporary, showy salvation which only lasts for a time, I would scarcely be at all grateful for it; but when I know that those whom God saves, He saves with an *everlasting* salvation; when I know that He gives to them an *everlasting* righteousness; when I know that He settles them on an *everlasting* foundation of *everlasting* love, and that He will bring them to His *everlasting* kingdom—oh, then I do wonder, and I am astonished that such a blessing as this should ever have been given to me!—

“Pause, my soul! Adore and wonder!
Ask, ‘Oh, why such love to me?’
Grace has put me in the number
Of the Savior’s family:
Hallelujah!
Thanks, eternal thanks, to Thee.”

I suppose there are some persons whose minds naturally incline towards the doctrine of free will; I can only say that mine inclines as naturally towards the doctrines of sovereign grace! Sometimes, when I see some of the worst characters in the street, I feel as if my heart must burst forth in tears of gratitude that God has never let me act as they have done! I have thought if God had left me alone, and had not touched me by His grace what a great sinner I would have been! I would have run to the utmost lengths of sin, and dived into the very depths of evil! Nor would I have stopped at any vice or folly, if God had not restrained me; I feel that I would have been a very king of sinners if God had let me alone. I cannot understand the reason why I am saved except upon the ground that God would have it so. I cannot, if I look ever so earnestly, discover any kind of reason in myself why I should be a partaker of divine grace. If I am at this moment with Christ, it is only because Christ Jesus would have His will with me, and that will was that I should be with Him where He is, and should share His glory. I can put the crown nowhere but upon the head of Him whose mighty grace has saved me from going down into the pit of hell!

Looking back on my past life, I can see that the dawning of it all was of God—of God *effectively*. I took no torch with which to light the sun, but the sun enlightened me. I did not commence my spiritual life—no, I rather kicked and struggled against the things of the Spirit. When He drew me, for a time I

did not run after Him—there was a natural hatred in my soul of everything holy and good! Wooings were lost upon me—warnings were cast to the wind—thunders were despised. As for the whispers of His love, they were rejected as being less than nothing and vanity. But, sure I am, I can say now, speaking on behalf of myself, “He only is my salvation.” It was He who turned my heart, and brought me down on my knees before Him. I can in very deed, say with Doddridge and Toplady—

“Grace taught my soul to pray,
And made my eyes overflow.”

And coming to this moment, I can add—

“’Tis grace has kept me to this day,
And will not let me go.”

Well can I remember the manner in which I learned the doctrines of grace in a single instant. Born, as all of us are by nature, an Arminian, I still believed the old things I had heard continually from the pulpit, and did not see the grace of God. When I was coming to Christ, I thought I was doing it all myself, and though I sought the Lord earnestly, I had no idea the Lord was seeking me. I do not think the young convert is at first aware of this. I can recall the very day and hour when first I received those truths in my own soul—when they were, as John Bunyan says, burnt into my heart as with a hot iron, and I can recollect how I felt that I had grown all of a sudden from a babe into a man—that I had made progress in Scriptural knowledge through having found, once and for all, the clue to the truth of God. One week night, when I was sitting in the House of God, I was not thinking much about the preacher’s sermon, for I did not believe it. The thought struck me, how

did you come to be a Christian? I sought the Lord. *But how did you* come to seek the Lord? The truth flashed across my mind in a moment—I would not have sought Him unless there had been some previous influence in my mind to make me seek Him! I prayed, thought I, but then I asked myself, How came I to pray? I was induced to pray by reading the Scriptures. How came I to read the Scriptures? I did read them, but what led me to do so? Then, in a moment, I saw that God was at the bottom of it all, and that *He* was the author of my faith—and so, the whole doctrine of grace opened up to me and from that doctrine I have not departed to this day, and I desire to make this my constant confession, “I ascribe my change wholly to God.”

I once attended a service where the text happened to be, “He shall choose our inheritance for us”—and the good man who occupied the pulpit was more than a little of an Arminian. Therefore, when he commenced, he said, “This passage refers entirely to our *temporal* inheritance; it has nothing whatever to do with our everlasting destiny, for,” he said, “we do not want Christ to choose for us in the matter of heaven or hell. It is so plain and easy that every man who has a grain of common sense will choose heaven, and any person would know better than to choose hell! We have no need of any superior intelligence, or any greater being to choose heaven or hell for us; it is left to our own free will, and we have enough wisdom given us, sufficiently correct means to judge for ourselves.” And therefore, as he very logically inferred, there was no necessity for Jesus Christ, or anyone, to make a choice for us; who could choose the inheritance for ourselves without any assistance. “Ah,” I thought, “but, my good brother, it may be very true that we *could*, but I think we would want something more than common sense before we *would* choose aright.” First, let me ask, must we not all of us admit an overruling providence and the

appointment of Jehovah's hand as to the means whereby we came into this world? Those men, who think that, afterwards, we are left to our own free will to choose this one, or the other to direct our steps, must admit that our *entrance* into the world was not of our own will, but that God had then to choose for us. What circumstances were those in our power which led us to elect certain persons to be our parents? Had we anything to do with it? Did not God Himself appoint our parents, native place and friends?

Could He not have caused me to be born with the skin of the African; brought forth by a filthy mother who would nurse me in her "hut," and teach me to bow down to pagan gods, quite as easily as to have given me a pious mother, who would each morning and night bend her knees in prayer on my behalf? Or, might He not, if He had pleased, have given me some degenerate to have been my parent—from whose lips I might have early heard fearful, filthy, and obscene language? Might He not have placed me where I would have had a drunken father who would have imprisoned me in a very dungeon of ignorance, and brought me up in the chains of crime? Was it not God's providence that I had so happy a lot, that both my parents were His children, and endeavored to train me up in the fear of the Lord? John Newton used to tell a whimsical story and laugh at it too, of a good woman who said, in order to prove the doctrine of election, "Ah, sir, the Lord must have loved me *before* I was born, or else He would not have seen anything in me to love afterwards." I am sure it is true in my case. I believe the doctrine of election because I am quite certain that if God had not chosen me, I would never have chosen Him; and I am sure He chose me before I was born, or else He never would have chosen me afterwards! He must have elected me for reasons unknown to me, for I never could find any reason in myself why He should have looked upon me with

special love. So I am forced to accept that great Biblical doctrine.

I recollect an Arminian brother telling me that he had read the Scriptures through a score or more times and could never find the doctrine of election in them; he added that he was sure he would have done so if it had been there, for he read the Word of God on his knees. I said to him, “I think you read the Bible in a very uncomfortable posture, and if you had read it in your easy chair, you would have been more likely to understand it. Pray, by all means, and the more the better, but it is a piece of superstition to think there is anything in the posture in which a man puts himself for *reading*! As to reading through the Bible 20 times without having found anything about the doctrine of election, the wonder is that you found anything at all—you must have galloped through it at such a rate that you were not likely to have any intelligible idea of the meaning of the Scriptures.” If it would be marvelous to see one river leap up from the earth, full-grown, what would it be to gaze upon a vast spring from which all the rivers of the earth should at once come bubbling up, a million of them born at a birth? What a vision would it be! Who can conceive it? And yet the love of God is that fountain, from which all the rivers of mercy which have ever gladdened our race—all the rivers of grace in time and of glory hereafter—take their rise. My soul, stand at that sacred fountainhead and adore and magnify forever and ever, God, even our Father, who has loved us! In the very beginning, when this great universe lay in the mind of God like unborn forests in the acorn cup—long before the echoes awoke the solitudes—before the mountains were brought forth; long before the light flashed through the sky, God loved His chosen creatures! Before there was any created being—when the ether was not fanned by an angel’s wings; when space itself had not an existence; when there was nothing save God alone—even

then, in that loneliness of Deity, and in that deep quiet and profundity, His heart moved with love for His chosen! Their names were written on His heart, and then were they dear to His soul! Jesus loved His people before the foundation of the world—even from eternity! And when He called me by His grace, He said to me, “I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” Then, in the fullness of time, He purchased me with His blood; He let His heart run out in one deep gaping wound for me long before I loved Him! Yes, when He first came to me, did I not spurn Him? When He knocked at the door, and asked for entrance, did I not drive Him away and do despite to His grace? Ah, I can remember that I full often did so until, at last, by the power of His effectual grace, He said, “I must, I will come in.” And then He turned my heart, and made me love Him—but even till now I would have resisted Him, had it not been for His grace.

Well, since He purchased me when I was dead in sins, does it not follow, as a necessary and logical consequence, that He must have loved me first? Did my Savior die for me because I believed on Him? No. I was not then in existence! I had then no being. Could the Savior, therefore, have died because I had faith, when I was not yet born? Could that have been possible? Could that have been the origin of the Savior's love towards me? Oh, no! My Savior died for me long before I believed. “But,” says someone, “He foresaw that you would have faith, and therefore He loved you.” What did He foresee about my faith? Did He foresee that I should get that faith, myself, and that I should believe on Him of myself? No! Christ could not foresee that, because no Christian will ever say that faith came of itself without the gift, and without the working of the Holy Spirit. I have met with a great many believers, and talked with them about this matter, but I never knew one who could put

his hand on his heart and say, “I believed in Jesus without the assistance of the Holy Spirit.” I am bound to the doctrine of the depravity of the human heart because I find myself depraved in heart, and have daily proofs that in my flesh there dwells no good thing! If God enters into covenant with unfallen man, man is so insignificant a creature, that it must be an act of gracious condescension on the Lord’s part; but if God enters into covenant with *sinful* man, he is then so offensive a creature, that it must be, on God’s part, an act of pure, free, rich, sovereign grace! When the Lord entered into covenant with me, I am sure that it was all of grace, nothing else but grace; when I remember what a den of unclean beasts and birds my heart was, and how strong was my unrenewed will, how obstinate and rebellious against the sovereignty of the divine rule, I always feel inclined to take the very lowest room in my Father’s house; and when I enter heaven, it will be to go among the less than the least of all saints, and with the chief of sinners.

The late lamented Mr. Denham has put, at the foot of his portrait, a most admirable text, “salvation is of the Lord.” That is just an epitome of Calvinism—it is the sum and substance of it—if anyone should ask me what I mean by a Calvinist, I would reply, “He is one who says salvation is of the Lord.” I cannot find in Scripture any other doctrine than this; it is the essence of the Bible, “He only is my rock and my salvation.” Tell me anything contrary to this truth of God, and it will be a heresy! Tell me a heresy, and I shall find its essence *here*, that it has departed from this great, this fundamental, this rock truth, “God is my rock and my salvation.” What is the heresy of Rome, but the addition of something to the perfect merits of Jesus Christ—the bringing in of the works of the flesh to assist in our justification? And what is the heresy of Arminianism, but the addition of something to the work of the Redeemer? Every heresy, if brought to the touchstone, will discover itself here! I

have my own private opinion that there is no such thing as preaching Christ and Him crucified unless we preach what nowadays is called Calvinism; it is a nickname to call it Calvinism—Calvinism is the gospel and nothing else! I do not believe we can preach the gospel if we do not preach justification by faith, without works—nor unless we preach the sovereignty of God in His dispensation of grace—nor unless we exalt the electing, unchangeable, eternal, immutable, conquering love of Jehovah! Nor do I think we can preach the gospel unless we base it upon the special and particular redemption of His elect and chosen people which Christ worked out upon the cross. Nor can I comprehend a gospel which lets saints fall away after they are called, and allows the children of God to be burned in the fires of damnation after having once believed in Jesus! Such a gospel I abhor—

“If ever it should come to pass,
That sheep of Christ might fall away,
My fickle, feeble soul, alas!
Would fall a thousand times a day.”

If one dear saint of God had perished, so might all! If one of the covenant ones is lost, so may all be! And then there is no gospel promise true, but the Bible is a lie, and there is nothing in it worth my acceptance. I will be an infidel at once when I can believe that a saint of God can ever fall finally! If God has loved me once, then He will love me forever; God has a mastermind—He arranged everything in His gigantic intellect long before He did it—and once having settled it, He never alters it! “This shall be done,” He says, and the iron hand of destiny marks it down, and it is brought to pass. “This is My purpose,” and it stands—neither earth or hell alter it. “This is My decree,” He says, “promulgate it, you holy angels. Rend it

down from the gate of heaven, you devils, if you can—but you cannot alter the decree—it shall stand forever.” God alters not His plans. Why should He? He is Almighty, and therefore can perform His pleasure. Why should He? He is the all-wise, and therefore cannot have planned wrongly. Why should He? He is the everlasting God, and therefore cannot die before His plan is accomplished. Why should He change? You worthless atoms of earth, ephemera of a day! You creeping insects upon this bay-leaf of existence—you may change *your* plans—but He shall never, never change His! Has He told me that His plan is to save me? If so, I am forever safe—

“My name from the palms of His hands
Eternity will not erase,
Impressed on His heart it remains,
In marks of indelible grace.”

I do not know how some people who believe that a Christian can fall from grace manage to be happy. It must be a very commendable thing in them to be able to get through a day without despair! If I did not believe the doctrine of the final perseverance of the Saints, I think I would be, of all men, the most miserable, because I should lack any ground of comfort. I could not say, whatever state of heart I came into, that I should be like a well-spring of water whose stream fails not; I should rather have to take the comparison of an intermittent spring that might stop all of a sudden, or a reservoir which I had no reason to expect would always be full. I believe that the happiest of Christians, and the truest of Christians are those, who never dare to doubt God, but who take His Word simply as it stands, and believe it and ask no questions—just feeling assured that if God has said it, it will be so. I bear my willing testimony that I have no reason, nor even the shadow of a

reason, to doubt my Lord, and I challenge heaven and earth, and hell to bring any proof that God is untrue! From the depths of hell I call the fiends, and from this earth I call the tried and afflicted believers, and to heaven I appeal and challenge the long experience of the blood-washed host—and there is not to be found in the three realms, a single person who can bear witness to one fact which can disprove the faithfulness of God, or weaken His claim to be trusted by His servants! There are many things that may or may not happen, but this I know shall happen—

“He shall present my soul,
Unblemished and complete,
Before the glory of His face,
With joys divinely great.”

All the purposes of man have been defeated, but not the purposes of God! The promises of man may be broken—many of them are *made* to be broken—but the promises of God shall all be fulfilled! He is a promise-maker, but He never was a promise-breaker; He is a promise-keeping God, and every one of His people shall prove it to be so. This is my grateful, personal confidence, “The Lord will perfect that which concerns me”—unworthy me, lost and ruined me! He will yet save me. And—

“I, among the blood-washed throng,
Shall wave the palm and wear the crown,
And shout loud victor.”

I go to a land which the plow of earth has never upturned; where it is greener than earth's best pastures, and richer than her most abundant harvests ever saw! I go to a building of more

gorgeous architecture than man has ever built—it is not of mortal design—it is “a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” All I shall know and enjoy in heaven will be given to me by the Lord, and I shall say, when at last I appear before Him—

“Grace all the work shall crown
Through everlasting days;
It lays in heaven the topmost stone,
And well deserves the praise.”

I know there are some who think it necessary to their system of theology to limit the merit of the blood of Jesus—if my theological system needed such a limitation, I would cast it to the winds! I cannot, I dare not, allow the thought to find a lodging in my mind—it seems so near akin to blasphemy. In Christ’s finished work, I see an ocean of merit; my plummet finds no bottom, my eye discovers no shore. There is sufficient efficacy in the blood of Christ, if God had so willed it, to have saved not only all in this world, but all in ten thousand worlds had they transgressed their Maker’s law! Once admit infinity into the matter, and limit is out of the question! Having a divine person for an offering, it is not consistent to conceive of limited value; boundaries and measure are inapplicable terms to the divine Sacrifice! The intent of the divine purpose fixes the application of the infinite offering, but does not change it into a finite work. Think of the numbers upon whom God has bestowed His grace; think of the countless hosts in heaven—if you were introduced there today, you would find it as easy to count the stars, or the sands of the sea, as to count the multitudes that are before the throne even now! They have come from the East and from the West, from the North and

from the South, and they are sitting down with Abraham and with Isaac, and with Jacob in the kingdom of God.

Beside those in heaven, think of the saved ones on earth. Blessed be God, His elect on earth are to be counted by millions! I believe the days are coming, brighter days than these, when there shall be multitudes upon multitudes brought to know the Savior, and to rejoice in Him. The Father's love is not only for a few, but for an exceedingly great company. "A great multitude, which no man could number," will be found in heaven! A man can reckon up to very high figures; set to work your Newtons, your mightiest calculators, and they can count great numbers; but God, and God alone, can tell the multitude of His redeemed! I believe there will be more in heaven than in hell. If anyone asks me why I think so, I answer, because Christ, in everything, is to "have the pre-eminence," and I cannot conceive how He could have the pre-eminence if there are to be more in the dominions of Satan than in Paradise. Moreover, I have never read that there is to be in hell a great multitude which no man could number. I rejoice to know that the souls of all infants, as soon as they die, speed their way to Paradise; think what a multitude there is of them! Then there are already in heaven unnumbered myriads of the spirits of just men made perfect—the redeemed of all nations and kindreds and people, and tongues up till now. And there are better times coming, when the religion of Christ shall be universal—

"He shall reign from pole to pole,
With illimitable sway,"

when whole kingdoms shall bow down before Him, and nations shall be born in a day, and in the thousand years of the great millennial state, there will be enough saved to make up all the deficiencies of the thousands of years that have gone before!

Christ shall be Master everywhere, and His praise shall be sounded in every land. Christ shall have the pre-eminence at last; His train shall be far larger than that which shall attend the chariot of the grim monarch of hell!

Some persons love the doctrine of universal atonement, because, they say, “It is so beautiful. It is a lovely idea that Christ should have died for all men. It commends itself,” they say, “to the instincts of humanity! There is something in it full of joy and beauty.” I admit there is, but beauty may be often associated with lies! There is much which I might admire in the theory of universal redemption, but I will just show what the supposition necessarily involves. If Christ on His cross intended to save every man, then He intended to save those who were lost before He died; if the doctrine is true—that He died for all men—then He died for some who were in hell before He came into this world—for doubtless there were even then myriads there who had been cast away because of their sins! Once again—if it were Christ’s intention to save all men, how deplorably has He been disappointed, for we have His own testimony that there is a lake which burns with fire and brimstone, and into that pit of woe have been cast some of the very persons who, according to the theory of universal redemption, were bought with His blood! That seems to me a conception a thousand times more repulsive than any of those consequences which are said to be associated with the Calvinistic and Christian doctrine of special and particular redemption! To think that my Savior died for men who were, or are in hell, seems a supposition too horrible for me to entertain! To imagine for a moment that He was the substitute for all the sons of men, and that God, having first punished the substitute, afterwards punished the sinners, seems to conflict with all my ideas of divine justice; that Christ should offer an atonement and satisfaction for the sins of all men, and that

afterwards some of those very men should be punished for the sins for which Christ had already atoned, appears to me to be the most monstrous iniquity that could ever have been imputed to Saturn, to Janus, to the goddess of the Thugs, or to the most diabolical heathen deities! God forbid that we should ever think thus of Jehovah, the just and wise and God!

There is no soul living who holds more firmly to the doctrines of grace than I do, and if any man asks me whether I am ashamed to be called a Calvinist, I answer—I wish to be called nothing but a Christian—but if you ask me, do I hold the doctrinal views which were held by John Calvin? I reply I do in the main hold them, and rejoice to avow it; but far be it from me even to imagine that Zion contains none but Calvinistic Christians within her walls, or that there are none saved who do not hold our views! Most atrocious things have been spoken about the character and spiritual condition of John Wesley, the modern prince of Arminians. I can only say concerning him, that while I detest many of the doctrines which he preached, yet for the man, himself, I have a reverence second to no Wesleyan. And if there were needed two apostles to be added to the number of the twelve, I do not believe that there could be found two men more fit to be so added than George Whitefield, and John Wesley! The character of John Wesley stands beyond all imputation for self-sacrifice, zeal, holiness, and communion with God. He lived far above the ordinary level of common Christians, and was one “of whom the world was not worthy.” I believe there are multitudes of men who cannot see these truths of Calvinism, or, at least, cannot see them in the way in which we put them, who nevertheless have received Christ as their Savior, and are as dear to the heart of the God of grace as the soundest Calvinist in or out of heaven. I do not think I differ from any of my Hyper-Calvinistic brothers and sisters in what I do believe, but I differ from them

in what they do *not* believe. I do not hold any less than they do, but I hold a little more, and I think, a little more of the truth of God revealed in the Scriptures. Not only are there a few cardinal doctrines by which we can steer our ship North, South, East, or West, but as we study the Word, we shall begin to learn something about the Northwest, and Northeast, and all else that lies between the four cardinal points. The system of truth revealed in the Scriptures is not simply one straight line, but two—no man will ever get a right view of the gospel until he knows how to look at the two lines at once. For instance, I read in one book of the Bible, “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is thirsty come; and whoever wills, let him take the water of life freely.” Yet I am taught, in another part of the same inspired Word, that, “It is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.” I see in one place God in providence presiding over all, and yet I see, and I cannot help seeing that man acts as he pleases, and that God has left his actions, in a great measure, to his own free will.

Now, if I were to declare that man was so free to act that there was no control of God over his actions, I would be driven very near to atheism. But if, on the other hand, I should declare that God so overrules all things that man is not free enough to be responsible, I would be driven at once into Antinomianism or fatalism. That God predestines, and yet that man is responsible, are two facts that few can clearly see; they are believed to be inconsistent, and contradictory to each other. If, then, I find taught in one part of the Bible that everything is foreordained—that is true; and if I find, in another Scripture, that man is responsible for all his actions—that is true! It is only *my* folly that leads me to imagine that these two truths of God can ever contradict each other! I do not believe they can ever be welded into one upon any *earthly* anvil—but they certainly

shall be one in *eternity*. They are two lines that are so nearly parallel, that the human mind which pursues them farthest will never discover that they converge—but they *do converge*—and they will meet somewhere in eternity, close to the throne of God, where all of His truths spring!

It is often said that the doctrines we believe, have a tendency to lead us to sin; I have heard it asserted most positively that those high doctrines which we love, and which we find in the Scriptures, are licentious ones! I do not know who will have the hardihood to make that assertion when they consider that the holiest of men have been believers in them. I ask the man who dares to say that Calvinism is a licentious religion, what he thinks of the character of Augustine, or Calvin, or Whitefield, who in successive ages were the great exponents of the system of grace? Or what will he say of the Puritans, whose works are full of them? Had a man been an Arminian in those days, he would have been accounted the vilest heretic breathing; but now *we* are looked upon as the heretics and *they* as the orthodox! We have gone back to the old school; we can trace our descent from the apostles; it is that vein of free grace running through the sermonizing of Baptists which has saved us as a denomination! Were it not for that, we should not stand where we are today. We can run a golden line up to Jesus Christ, Himself, through a holy succession of mighty fathers who all held these glorious truths—and we can ask concerning them—“Where will you find holier and better men in the world?” No doctrine is so calculated to preserve a man from sin as the doctrine of the grace of God—those who have called it “a licentious doctrine”—did not know anything at all about it. Poor ignorant things—they little knew that their own vile stuff was the most licentious doctrine under heaven; if they knew the grace of God in truth, they would soon see that there was no preservative from lying like a knowledge that we are elect of

God from the foundation of the world; there is nothing like a belief in my eternal perseverance, and the immutability of my Father's affection which can keep me near to Him from a motive of simple gratitude! Nothing makes a man so virtuous as belief of the truths of God! A lying doctrine will soon beget a lying practice; a man cannot have an erroneous belief without, by-and-by, having an erroneous life. I believe the one thing naturally begets the other. Of all men—those have the most unselfish piety, the most sublime reverence, the most ardent devotion—who believe that they are saved by grace, without works, through faith, and that not of themselves, it is the gift of God! Christians should take heed and see that it always is so, lest by any means Christ should be crucified afresh, and put to an open shame.

MISREPRESENTATIONS OF TRUE CALVINISM CLEARED AWAY

Note: In the year 1861, the church of which Mr. C. H Spurgeon was pastor, completed its tremendous new structure, the Metropolitan Tabernacle. The first sermon by Mr. Spurgeon in this new building was preached on Monday afternoon, March 25th. A few days later in this new building, on Thursday, April 1st, Mr. Spurgeon had what we today would call a Bible Conference. The theme of the conference was, "Exposition of the Doctrines of Grace." The speakers and their subjects were as follows—election by John Bloomfield; human depravity by Evan Probert; particular redemption by James A. Spurgeon, Mr. Spurgeon's brother; effectual calling by James Smith, and the final perseverance of believers in Christ Jesus by William O'Neil. Mr. Spurgeon, as pastor of the church, was the "Master of Ceremonies," and he gave the following introductory message as printed in Volume 7 of The New Park Street and Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

The main body of this message is as follows:

There is nothing upon which men need to be more instructed than upon the question of what Calvinism really is. The most infamous allegations have been brought against us, and sometimes, I must fear, by men who knew them to be utterly untrue; and to this day there are many of our opponents who, when they run short of matter, invent and make for themselves a man of straw! They call that man of straw, John Calvin, and then shoot all their arrows at it. We have not come here to defend your man of straw; shoot at him or burn him as you will, and if it suits your convenience, go ahead and still oppose doctrines which were never taught, and rail at fictions which, save in your brain, were never in existence! We come here to state what our views really are, and we trust that any who do not agree with us will do us the justice of not misrepresenting us. If they can disprove our doctrines, let them state them fairly, and then overthrow them—but why should they first caricature our opinions, and then afterwards attempt to put them down?

Among the gross falsehoods which have been uttered against the Calvinists proper is the wicked slander that we hold the damnation of little infants. A baser lie was never uttered! There may have existed somewhere—in some corner of the earth—an evildoer who would dare to say that there were infants in hell, but I have never met with him, nor have I met with a man who ever saw such a person. We say, with regard to infants, Scripture said but very little, and therefore, where Scripture is confessedly scant, it is for no man to determine dogmatically; but I think I speak for the entire body, or certainly with exceedingly few exceptions, and those unknown to me, when I say we hold that all infants are elect of God, and are, therefore, saved, and we look to this as being the means by

which Christ shall see of the travail of His soul to a great degree, and we do sometimes hope that thus the multitude of the saved shall be made to exceed the multitude of the lost. Whatever views our friends may hold upon the point, they are not necessarily connected with Calvinistic doctrine. I believe that the Lord Jesus, who said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven," does daily and constantly receive into His loving arms those tender ones who are only shown, and then snatched away to heaven. Our hymns are no ill witness to our faith on this point, and one of them runs thus—

"Millions of infant souls compose
The family above."

Toplady, one of the keenest of Calvinists, was of this number. "In my remarks," he says, "on Dr. Newell, I testified my firm belief that the souls of *all departed infants* are with God in glory—that in the decree of predestination to life, God has included all whom He decreed to take away in infancy—and that the decree of reprobation has nothing to do with them." No, he proceeds farther, and asks, with reason, how the anti-Calvinistic system of conditional salvation, and election, or good works foreseen, will suit with the salvation of infants? It is plain that Arminians and Pelagians must introduce a *new principle* of election—and in so far as the salvation of infants is concerned, become Calvinists! Is it not an argument in behalf of Calvinism that its principle is uniform throughout, and that no change is needed on the ground on which man is saved, whether young or old? John Newton, of London, the friend of Cowper, noted for his Calvinism, holds that the children in heaven exceed its adult inhabitants in their entire multitudinous array! Gill, a very champion of Calvinism, held the doctrine that all dying in infancy are saved; an intelligent modern writer, Dr.

Russell of Dundee, also a Calvinist, maintains the same views. When it is considered that nearly *one-half* of the human race die in early years, it is easy to see what a vast accession must be daily and hourly making to the blessed population of heaven!

A more common charge, brought by more decent people, for I must say that the last charge is never brought except by disreputable persons—a more common charge is that we hold clear fatalism! Now, there may be Calvinists who are fatalists, but Calvinism and fatalism are two distinct things. Do not most Christians hold the doctrine of the providence of God? Do not all Christians; do not all believers in God hold the doctrine of His foreknowledge? All the difficulties which are laid against the doctrine of predestination might, with equal force, be laid against that of divine foreknowledge. We believe that God has predestinated all things from the beginning, but there is a difference between the predestination of an intelligent, all-wise, all-bounteous God, and that blind fatalism which simply says, “It is because it is to be.” Between the *predestination of Scripture*, and the fate of the Koran, every sensible man must perceive a difference of the most essential character. We do not deny that the thing is so ordained that it must be, but *why* is it to be but that the Father—God—whose name is love, ordained it? Not because of any necessity in circumstances that such-and-such a thing should take place; though the wheels of providence revolve with rigid exactness, yet not without purpose and wisdom! The wheels are full of eyes, and everything ordained is so ordained that it shall conduce to the grandest of all ends—the glory of God—and next to that, the good of His creatures.

But we are next met by some who tell us that we preach the wicked and horrible doctrine of *sovereign and unmerited reprobation*. “Oh,” they say, “you teach that men are damned because God made them to be damned, and that they go to hell, not because of *sin*, not because of *unbelief*—but because of some

dark decree with which God has stamped their destiny.” Brothers and sisters, this is another unfair charge! Election does *not* involve reprobation! There may be some who hold unconditional reprobation, but I stand not here as their defender—let them defend themselves as best they can! I hold God’s election, but I testify just as clearly that if any man is lost, he is lost for *sin*. This has been the uniform statement of Calvinistic ministers. I might refer you to our standards such as “The Westminster Assembly’s Catechism” and to all our Confessions, for they all distinctly state that man is lost for sin, and that there is no punishment put on any man except that which he richly and righteously deserves. If any of you have ever uttered that libel against us, do it not again—for we are as guiltless of that as you are yourselves! I am speaking personally—and I think in this I would command the suffrages of my brothers—I do know that the appointment of God extends to all things; I stand not in this pulpit, nor in any other to lay the damnation of any man anywhere but upon himself! If he is lost, damnation is *all of men*. But, if he is saved, salvation is still *all of God*.

To state this important point yet more clearly and explicitly, I shall quote at large from an able Presbyterian divine—“The pious Methodist is taught that the Calvinist represents God as creating men in order to destroy them; he is taught that Calvinists hold that men are lost, not because they sin, but because they are non-elected. Believing this to be a true statement, is it not amazing that the Methodist stops short, and declares himself, if not an Arminian, at least an anti-predestinarian? But no *statement can be more scandalously untrue*. It is the uniform doctrine of Calvinism that God creates all for His own glory—that He is infinitely righteous and kind, and that where men perish, it is only for their sins. In speaking of suffering, whether in this world, or in the world to come—

whether it respects angels or men, the Westminster standards (which may be considered as the most authoritative modern statement of the system) invariably connect the punishment with previous sin, and sin only—‘As for those wicked and ungodly men whom God, as a *righteous* Judge, FOR their SINS does blind and harden, from them He not only withholds His grace, whereby they might have been enlightened in their understandings, and worked upon in their hearts, but sometimes also withdraws the gifts which they had, and exposes them to such objects as *their corruption* makes occasion of sin; and withal gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world and the power of Satan, whereby it comes to pass that they *harden themselves* even under those means which God uses for the softening of others.’

“The Larger Catechism, speaking of the unsaved among angels and men, says, ‘God, according to His sovereign power, and the unsearchable counsel of His own will (whereby He extends or withholds favor as He pleases) has passed by and foreordained the rest to dishonor and wrath, *to before their sin inflicted*, to the praise of the glory of His justice.’ Again, ‘The end of God appointing this day (of the last judgment) is for the manifestation of the glory of His mercy, in the eternal salvation of the elect, and of His justice in the damnation of the reprobate *who are wicked and disobedient*.’

“This is no more than what the Methodist and all other Evangelical bodies acknowledge—that where men perish it is in consequence of their *sin*. If it is asked why sin which destroys is permitted to enter the world; that is a question which bears not only on the Calvinist, but equally on all other parties. They are as much concerned and bound to answer it as he. No, the question is not confined to Christians. All who believe in the existence of God—in His righteous character and perfect providence are equally under obligation to answer it. Whatever

may be the reply of others, that of the Calvinist may be regarded as given in the statement of the Confession of Faith, which declares that God's providence extends itself even to the first fall and other sins of angels and men, etc.—*Yet so as the sinfulness thereof proceeds only from the creature, and not from God, who being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be 'the author or approver of sin.'* It is difficult to see what more could be said upon the subject; and if such is the undoubted sentiments of Calvinists, then what misrepresentation can be more gross than that which describes them as holding that sinners perish irrespective of their sin, or that God is the author of their sin? What is the declaration of Calvin? *'Every soul departs (at death) to that place which it has prepared for itself while in this world.'* It is hard to be charged with holding as sacred truth what one abhors as horrid blasphemy, and yet this is the treatment which has been perseveringly meted out to Calvinists in spite of the most solemn and indignant disclaimers! Against nothing have they more stoutly protested than the thought that the infinitely holy and righteous, and amiable Jehovah is the author of sin—and yet how often do the supporters of rival systems charge them with this as an article of faith?"

A yet further charge against us is that we dare not preach the gospel to the unregenerate! That, in fact, our theology is so narrow and cramped, that we cannot preach to sinners! Gentlemen, if you dare to say this, I would take you to any library in the world where the old Puritan fathers are stored up, and I would let you take down any one volume and tell me if you ever read more telling exhortations and addresses to sinners in any of your own books! Did not Bunyan plead with sinners and whoever classed him with any but the Calvinists? Did not Charnock, Goodwin, and Howe agonize for souls, and what were they but Calvinists? Did not Jonathan Edwards preach to sinners, and who more clear and explicit on these

doctrinal matters? The works of our innumerable divines teem with passionate appeals to the unconverted! Oh, sirs, if I should begin the list, time should fail me; it is an indisputable fact that we have labored more than they all for the winning of souls! Was George Whitefield any the less seraphic? Did his eyes weep the fewer tears or his heart move with less compassion because he believed in God's electing love, and preached the sovereignty of the Most High? It is an unfounded slander! Our souls are not stony; our hearts are not withdrawn from the compassion which we ought to feel for our fellow men; we can hold all our views, and yet can weep as Christ did over a Jerusalem which was certainly to be destroyed! Again I must say I am not defending certain brothers who have exaggerated Calvinism. I speak of Calvinism proper—not that which has run to seed, and outgrown its beauty and verdure. I speak of it as I find it in Calvin's *Institutes*, and especially in his *Expositions*. I have read them carefully. I take not my views of Calvinism from common repute, but from his books; nor do I, in thus speaking, even vindicate Calvinism as if I cared for the *name*, but I mean that glorious system which teaches that salvation is of grace from first to last! And again, then, I say it is an utterly unfounded charge that we dare not preach to sinners!

And then further, that I may clear up these points, and leave the less rubbish for my brothers to wheel away—we have sometimes heard it said, but those who say it ought to go to school to read the first book of history—that we who hold Calvinistic views are the *enemies of revivals*. Why, sirs, in the history of the Church, with but few exceptions, you could not find a revival at all that was not produced by the orthodox faith! What was that great work which was done by Augustine when the church suddenly woke up from the diseased and deadly sleep into which Pelagian doctrine had cast it? What was the Reformation, itself, but the waking up of men's minds to those

old truths of God? However far modern Lutherans may have turned aside from their ancient doctrines—and I must confess some of them would not agree with what I now say, yet, at any rate—Luther and Calvin had no dispute about predestination! Their views were identical, and Luther's, *On the Bondage of the Will* is as strong a book upon the free grace of God as Calvin, himself, could have written. Hear that great thunder while he cries in that book, "Let the Christian reader know, then, that God foresees nothing in a contingent manner—but that He foresees, proposes, and acts from His eternal and unchangeable will! This is the thunder stroke which breaks and overturns free will." Do I need mention to you better names than Huss, Jerome of Prague, Fartel, John Knox, Wickliffe, Wishart, and Bradford? Need I do more than say that these held the same views and that in their day anything like an Arminian revival was utterly unheard of and undreamed of? And then, to come to more modern times, there is the great exception—that wondrous revival under Mr. Wesley in which the Wesleyan Methodists had so large a share. But permit me to say that the strength of the doctrine of Wesleyan Methodism lay in its Calvinism! The great body of the Methodists disclaimed Pelagianism in whole and in part; they contended for man's entire depravity, the necessity of the direct agency of the Holy Spirit, and that the first step in the change proceeds not from the sinner, but from God. They denied at the time that they were Pelagians; does not the Methodist hold as firmly as ever we do, that man is saved by the operation of the Holy Spirit and only the Holy Spirit?

And are not many of Mr. Wesley's sermons full of that great truth—that the Holy Spirit is necessary to regeneration? Whatever mistakes he may have made, he continually preached the absolute necessity of the new birth by the Holy Spirit! And there are some other points of exceedingly close agreement; for

instance, even that of human inability. It matters not how some may abuse us when we say man could not of himself repent or believe—yet the old Arminian standards said the same. True, they affirm that God has given grace to every man, but they do not dispute the fact, that apart from that grace, there was no ability in man to do that which was good in his own salvation. And then let me say—if you turn to the continent of America, how gross the falsehood that Calvinistic doctrine is unfavorable to revivals! Look at that wondrous shaking under Jonathan Edwards and others which we might quote. Or turn to Scotland—what shall we say of M'Cheyne? What shall we say of those renowned Calvinists— Chalmers, Wardlaw, and before them, Livingstone, Haldane, Erskine, and the like? What shall we say of the men of their school but that, while they held and preached unflinchingly the great truths which we would propound today, yet God acknowledged their word, and multitudes were saved? And if it were not perhaps too much like boasting of one's own work under God, I might say personally I have never found the preaching of these doctrines lull this church to sleep! But always while we have loved to maintain these truths of God, we have agonized for the souls of men, and the 1,600 or more whom I have myself baptized upon profession of their faith, are living testimonies that these old truths in modern times have not lost their power to promote a revival of religion!

I have thus cleared away these allegations at the outset. I shall now need a few minutes more to say, with regard to the Calvinistic system, that there are some things to be said in its layout to which, of course, I attach but little comparative importance; but they ought not to be ignored. It is a fact that the system of doctrines called the Calvinistic, is so *exceedingly simple*, and so readily learned, that as a system of divinity it is more easily taught, and more easily grasped by unlettered minds

than any other. The poor have the gospel preached to them in a style which assists their memories, and commends itself to their judgments; it is a system which was practically acknowledged on high philosophic grounds by such men as Bacon, Leibnitz and Newton, and yet it can charm the soul of a child, and expand the intellect of a peasant! And then it has another virtue. I take it that the last is no mean one, but it has another—that when it is preached, there is a something in it which *excites thought*. A man may hear sermons upon the other theory which shall glance over him as the swallow's wing gently sweeps the brook—but these old doctrines either make a man so angry, that he goes home, and cannot sleep for very hatred—or else they bring him down into lowliness of thought, feeling the immensity of the things which he has heard! Either way, it excites and stirs him up not temporarily, but in a most lasting manner. These doctrines haunt him; he kicks against the pricks, and full often the Word forces a way into his soul! And I think this is no small thing for any doctrine to do—in an age given to slumber, and with human hearts so indifferent to the truth of God. I know that many men have gained more good by being made angry under a sermon than by being pleased by it—for being angry, they have turned the truth of God over and over again, and at last that truth has burned its way right into their hearts!

It also has this singular virtue—it is so coherent in all its parts. You cannot vanquish a Calvinist; you may think you can, but you cannot! The stones of the great doctrines so fit into each other that the more pressure there is applied to remove them, the more strenuously do they adhere. And you may mark that you cannot receive one of these doctrines without believing all! Hold, for instance, that man is utterly depraved, and you draw the inference, then, that certainly if God has such a creature to deal with, salvation must come from God alone!

And if from Him, the offended one, to an *offending* creature—then He has a right to give or withhold His mercy as He wills—you are thus forced upon election, and when you have gotten that, you have all—the others must follow. Some, by putting the strain upon their judgments, may manage to hold two or three points, and not the rest; but sound logic, I take it, requires a man to hold the whole or reject the whole! The doctrines stand like soldiers in a square, presenting on every side a line of defense which is hazardous to attack, but easy to maintain. And mark you—in these times when error is so rife, and neology strives to be so rampant, it is no little thing to put into the hands of a young man a weapon which can slay his foes—a weapon he can easily learn to handle—which he may grasp tenaciously, wield readily, and carry without fatigue. A weapon, I may add, which no rust can corrode, and no blows can break—effective and well annealed—a true Jerusalem blade of a temper fit for deeds of renown! The coherency of the parts, though it is, of course, but a trifle in comparison with other things, is not unimportant.

And then, I add, but this is the point my brothers will take up—it has this excellence—that it is *Scriptural*, and that it is *consistent with the experience of believers*. Men generally grow more Calvinistic as they advance in years. Is not that a sign that the doctrine is right? As they are growing riper for heaven; as they are getting nearer to the rest that remains for the people of God; the soul longs to feed on the finest of the wheat and abhors chaff and husks. And then, I add—and, in so doing, I would refute a slander that has sometimes been urged—this glorious truth has this excellence, that it *produces the holiest of men*. We can look back through all our annals and say, to those who oppose us, you can mention no names of men more holy, more devoted, more loving, more generous than those which we can mention! The saints of our calendar, though economized by

Rome, rank first in the book of life; the name of Puritan needs only to be heard to compel our reverence; holiness has reached a height among them which is rare, indeed, and well it might, for they loved and lived the truth of God! And if you say that our doctrine is harmful to human liberty, we point you to Oliver Cromwell, and to his brave Ironsides, Calvinists to a man! If you say it leads to inaction, we point you to the Pilgrim fathers, and the wilderness they subdued. We can put our finger upon every spot of land the wide world over, and say, "Here was something done by a man who believed in God's decrees, and, inasmuch as he did this, it is proof it did not make him inactive, it did not lull him to sloth."

The better way, however, of proving this point, is for each of us who hold these truths of God to be more prayerful, more watchful, more holy, more active than we have ever been before, and by so doing, we shall put to silence the gainsaying of foolish men! A living argument is an argument which tells upon every man. We cannot deny what we see and feel. Be it ours, if maligned, to disprove it by a blameless life, and it shall yet come to pass that our church and its sentiments, too, shall come forth, "Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."

THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE OPENING

RELIGIOUS SERVICES AND OTHER MEETINGS IN CONNECTION WITH THE OPENING OF THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

THE COMMITTEE is very happy to inform their friends and the public, that the vast edifice erected for the Church and Congregation of the Rev. C. H. SPURGEON is now nearly completed. The sum required has, by God's gracious providence, been obtained—with the exception of about £3,000. It is firmly believed that this remaining amount will be raised by means of the Bazaar, and the contributions given at the opening meetings.

In order that the large numbers who desire to be present upon this occasion may be accommodated, the proceedings have been extended throughout a whole month, and there are one or two days yet unoccupied, for which services will be afterwards advertised, if the present arrangement should prove insufficient. Owing to the early date at which this circular is issued, the particulars cannot be given; nor is it possible to publish all the names of the ministers and gentlemen who will assist at the services. The present program will be adhered to as nearly as possible, but some variations may very naturally occur. The meetings are, many of them, definite in their subjects and objectives, both for the sake of variety and edification. We desire not only to welcome our friends, and accept their assistance, but to set forth a public testimony of our faith and practice. It is hoped that the more prominent features of our religious views, as a church and denomination,

will thus be publicly expounded while our union with the faithful will be unmistakably affirmed.

Friends desiring tickets for any of the services are requested to make their application by letter to Mr. C. BLACKSHAW, Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, S. They are requested to enclose a stamped envelope, bearing their address, and to state clearly what meeting they wish to attend. As the number of tickets is limited, when compared with the expected demand, no large supply can be issued to any one person. It is hoped that many will see fit to enclose a contribution with their application. The Committee will endeavor, as far as possible, to oblige every applicant, but they cannot absolutely engage in every case, to supply the particular tickets required. Delay will necessarily occur in attending to so extensive an arrangement, but our friends will exercise patience, and we hope all will be gratified.

In conclusion, the Committee begs the renewed assistance of all their friends in this, their crowning effort, and they beg it to be distinctly understood that no persuasion will prevail upon their Pastor to use the building for public worship on the Sabbath until the whole of the liabilities are discharged. Shall the house be closed a single Sunday? We believe in our gracious God, and trust that He will so influence His people, that by the end of the second week, or before the Good Friday has passed away, all will be accomplished—in which case we shall meet for regular worship on Lord's Day, March 31st.

The proceeds of collections, after payment of contracted liabilities, will be needed for the completion of the front boundaries; the fitting up of the schools; furnishing the students' classrooms and other works which the Committee has not as yet commenced. Feeling it to be highly objectionable to run into debt, they have left many matters to be finished when the funds shall be forthcoming, and they are cheerfully

confident that before these preliminary meetings are over, this great temple of the Lord will have been finished in every department.

FIRST WEEK

Monday, March 18th—Meeting for prayer, at 7 o'clock in the morning. The Rev. C. H. SPURGEON will preside. A Bazaar will be held in the Lecture Hall and School Rooms, commencing at 12 o'clock each day, on Tuesday, March 19th; Wednesday, March 20th; Thursday, March 21st; Friday, March 22nd; and Saturday, March 23rd. Tickets of admission, one shilling each. Contributions of goods are earnestly requested, and should be forwarded to Mrs. SPURGEON, Clapham.

SECOND WEEK

Monday, March 25—Morning at 7—meeting for prayer. The Rev. G. ROGERS will preside. Afternoon at 3—sermon by Rev. C. H. SPURGEON; evening at 7—sermon by Rev. WITTBROOK of Bloomsbury Chapel.

Tuesday, March 26—Public meeting of our contributors. Chair to be taken at half-past 6, by Sir HENRY HAVELOCK. The Revs. C. STOVEL, M. BARRINGER, J. BIGWOOD, F. TUCKER, J. RUSSELL, and other ministers and gentlemen will address the meeting. Tickets will be given to contributors.

Wednesday, March 27—Public meeting of the neighboring churches. Chair to be taken at half-past six, by Dr. STEANE. The Revs. W. HOWIESON of Lion-Street; ANEMONE HALL, of Surrey Chapel; R. W. BUTTS, of Hanover Chapel; G. H. WHITE, of Bermondsey; G. ROGERS, of Albany

Chapel, and other ministers and gentlemen are expected to address the meeting.

Good Friday, March 29—Two sermons will be preached by the Rev. C. H. SPURGEON. Morning at a quarter to eleven; Evening at seven. Tickets for these services will be chiefly given to members and seat holders.

THIRD WEEK

Monday, April 1—Morning at 7—meeting for prayer. The Rev. B. DAVIES will preside. Evening at 7—A sermon will be preached by the Rev. JOHN GRAHAM of Craven Chapel.

Tuesday, April 2—A public meeting of our London Baptist brethren. Chair to be taken at 7 p.m., by Sir S. M. PETO, Bart. The Revs. A. C. THOMAS, J. H. HINTON, P. DICKERSON, JABEZ BURNS, D. D. and other ministers and gentlemen are expected to take part in the proceedings.

Wednesday, April, 3—A public meeting of the denominations. Chair to be taken at 6:30 p. m., by E. BALL ESQ., M.P. E. CORDEROY, ESQ., Rev. W. G. LEWIS, Rev. J. Hard, Rev. W. BUSHELL, and others, will be present. The subject of the Unity of the Church will be discussed by able ministers and laymen representing the various sections of the one church.

Thursday, April 4—A sermon will be preached by the Rev. OCTAVIUS WINSLOW of Bath, at 7 p. m.

FOURTH WEEK.

Monday, April 8—Morning at 7—meeting for prayer. Evening at 7—**Our own church.** The Pastor, elders and

deacons will speak; the former ministers are invited, and the Rev. JOHN SPURGEON, the father of the Pastor, is expected to preside. By this meeting, we desire to testify to the independency, unity and fellowship which each Church of Christ has within itself.

Tuesday, April 9—Baptismal service at 7 p.m. A sermon upon believers' baptism, by Rev. H. S. BROWN, of Liverpool. Rev. C. H. SPURGEON will baptize.

Wednesday, April 10—Communion. Dr. STEANE, Rev. C. H. SPURGEON, and Dr. HAMILTON will preside. This service is intended to set forth the essential oneness of the church, and the real fellowship in the body of Christ which is the privilege of all her members. Members of the various Protestant bodies can apply for cards through their pastors, or where this is impossible, through any members of the church under the care of the Rev. C. H. SPURGEON. The offering at this communion will be devoted to the memorial on behalf of the widow of the late Rev. JONATHAN GEORGE.

Thursday, April 11—Afternoon at 3—Calvinistic Doctrine. The Rev. C. H. SPURGEON will introduce the subject and five ministers will take up the points by which the Calvinistic creed is distinguished. The service commences at 3. There will be a pause at 5 for refreshment, and the friends will reassemble at 6:30. The addresses will last about half an hour each, and will be printed, as a Manual of Doctrine and be a memorial of the opening of this great house of God.

Friday, April 12—Oration by HOBBY VINCENT, ESQ. Subject—"Nonconformity in its political bearings." Chair to be taken at 7 p.m. by Sir JOHN BURGOYNE. Tickets, One shilling. Reserved seats, half-a-crown.

FIFTH WEEK.

The arrangements for the fifth week will be announced in the April Magazines. It is hoped that many friends from the country, being in town for the May meetings, will then favor us with their company, and to this end their applications will have the preference.

**PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THESE
MEETINGS TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE
OF JESUS CHRIST.**

348 CONSOLATION IN CHRIST – PHIL. 2:1

A Sermon
Delivered on Sabbath Morning, December 2nd, 1860,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At Exeter Hall, Strand

“If there is therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy.”— Philippians 2:1

THE LANGUAGE OF MAN has received a new coinage of words since the time of his perfection in Eden. Adam could scarcely have understood the word, *consolation*, for the simple reason that he did not understand in Eden the meaning of the word, *sorrow*. O how has our language been swollen through the floods of our griefs and tribulations! It was not sufficiently wide and wild for man when he was driven out of the garden into the wide, wide world. After he had once eaten of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, as his knowledge was extended, so must the language be by which he could express his thoughts and feelings. But, my hearers, when Adam first needed the word, *consolation*, there was a time when he could not find the fair jewel itself. Until that hour when the first promise was uttered, when the Seed of the woman was declared as being the coming man who should bruise the serpent’s head, Adam might masticate and digest the word, *sorrow*, but he could never season and flavor it with the hope or thought of *consolation*—or if the hope and thought might sometimes flit

across his mind, like a lightning flash in the midst of the tempest's dire darkness—yet it must have been too transient, too unsubstantial to have made glad his heart, or to soothe his sorrows. Consolation is the dropping of gentle dew from heaven on desert hearts beneath. True consolation, such as can reach the heart, must be one of the choicest gifts of divine mercy; and surely, we are not erring from sacred Scripture when we avow that in its full meaning, *consolation* can be found nowhere except in Christ who has come down from heaven, and who has again ascended to heaven to provide strong and everlasting consolation for those whom He has bought with His blood!

You will remember, my dear friends, that the Holy Spirit, during the present dispensation, is revealed to us as the Comforter. It is the Spirit's business to console and cheer the hearts of God's people. He does convict of sin; He does illuminate and instruct; but still the main part of His business lies in making glad the hearts of the renewed, in confirming the weak, and lifting up all those who are bowed down. Whatever the Holy Spirit may not be, He is always the Comforter to the Church, and this age is peculiarly the dispensation of the Holy Spirit in which Christ cheers us not by His presence, as He shall do, by-and-by, but by the indwelling and constant abiding of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. Now, mark—as the Holy Spirit is the Comforter, Christ is the comfort. The Holy Spirit consoles, but Christ *is the consolation*. If I may use the figure, the Holy Spirit is the Physician, but Christ is the medicine. *He* heals the wound, but it is by applying the holy ointment of Christ's name and grace. He takes not of His own things, but of the things of Christ. We are not consoled today by new revelations, but by the old revelation explained, enforced, and lit up with new splendor by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter! If we give to the Holy Spirit the Greek name of

Paraclete, as we sometimes do, then our heart confers on our blessed Lord Jesus the title of the *Paraclesis*. If the one is the Comforter, the other is the comfort!

I shall try this morning, first, to show how *Christ in His varied positions, is the consolation of the children of God in their varied trials*. Then we shall pass on, secondly, to observe that *Christ in His unchanging nature is the consolation to the children of God in their continual sorrows*. And lastly, I shall close by dwelling awhile upon the question as to *whether Christ is a consolation to us*—putting it personally, “Is Christ a present and available consolation for me.”

I. First, CHRIST IN HIS VARIED POSITIONS IS THE CONSOLATION FOR THE MANY ILLS OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD.

Our Master’s history is a long and eventful one; but every step of it may yield abundant comfort to the children of God. If we track Him from the highest throne of glory to the cross of deepest woe, and then through the grave, up again the shining steeps of heaven, and onward through His mediatorial kingdom, on to the day when He shall deliver up the throne to God, even our Father—throughout every part of that wondrous pathway there may be found the flowers of consolation growing plenteously, and the children of God have but to stoop and gather them! “*All His paths drop fatness, all His garments which He wears in His different offices smell of myrrh and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces whereby He makes His people glad.*”

To begin at the beginning—there are times when we look upon the past with the deepest grief. The withering of Eden’s flowers has often caused a fading in the garden of our souls. We have mourned exceedingly that we have been driven out to till the ground with the sweat of our brow—that the curse should have glanced on us through the sin of our first parent,

and we have been ready to cry, “Woe was the day in which our parent stretched forth his hand to touch the forbidden fruit.” If only he had rested in unsullied purity and that we, his sons and daughters, might have lived beneath an unclouded sky, and might never have mourned the ills of bodily pain or of spiritual distress! To meet this very natural source of grief, I bid you consider Christ in old eternity. Open now the eyes of your faith, believer, and see Christ as your everlasting covenant head stipulating to redeem you even before you had become a bonds slave, bound to deliver even before you had worn the chain. Think, I pray you, of the Eternal Council in which your restoration was planned and declared even before the fall and in which you were established in an eternal salvation, even before the necessity of that salvation had begun! O, my brothers and sisters, how it cheers our hearts to think of the anticipating mercy of God! He anticipated our fall, foreknew the ills which it would bring upon us, and provided in His eternal decree of predestinating love, an effectual remedy for all our diseases—a certain deliverance from all our sorrows! I see You, You fellow of the Eternal, You equal of the Almighty God! Your goings forth were of old. I see You lift Your right hand and engage Yourself to fulfill Your Father’s will—“In the volume of the book it is written of Me, ‘I delight to do Your will, O God.’” I see You forming, signing and sealing that everlasting covenant by which the souls of all the redeemed were then and there delivered from the curse, and made sure and certain inheritors of Your kingdom and of Your glory. In this respect Christ shines out as the consolation of His people.

Again—if ever your minds dwell with sadness upon the fact that we are at this day absent from the Lord, because we are present in the body, think of the great truth that Jesus Christ of old had delights with the sons of men, and He delights to commune and have fellowship with His people now.

Remember that your Lord and Master appeared to Abraham in the plains of Mamre under the disguise of a pilgrim. Abraham was a pilgrim and Christ, to show His sympathy with His servant, became a pilgrim, too! Did He not also appear to Jacob at the brook Jabbok? Jacob was a wrestler, and Jesus appears there as a wrestler, too. Did He not stand before Moses under the guise and figure of a flame in the midst of a bush? Was not Moses at the very time, the representative of a people who were like a bush burning with fire and yet not consumed? Did He not stand before Joshua—Joshua the leader of Israel's troops, and did He not appear to him as the captain of the Lord's host? And do you not well remember that when the three holy children walked in the midst of the fiery furnace, *He* was in the midst of the fire, too—not as a king—but as one in the fire with them? Cheer, then, your heart with this consoling inference! If Christ appeared to His servants in the olden time, and manifested Himself to them as bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh—in all their trials and their troubles—He will do no less for you today! He will be with you in passing through the fire—He will be your rock, your shield and your high tower. He will be your song, your banner and your crown of rejoicing. Fear not, He who visited His saints of old will surely not be long absent from His children today—His delights are still with His people, and still will He walk with us through this weary wilderness! Surely this makes Christ a most blessed consolation for His Israel!

And now, to pursue the Master's footsteps as He comes out of the invisible glories of Deity, and wears the visible garment of humanity. Let us view the babe of Bethlehem, the child of Nazareth, the Son of Man. See Him; He is in every respect a man. "Of the substance of His mother" is He made; in the substance of our flesh He suffers; in the trials of our flesh He bows His head—under the weakness of our flesh He prays,

and in temptation of our flesh He is kept and maintained by the grace within. *You* today are tried and troubled, and you ask for consolation. What better can be afforded you than what is presented to you in the fact that Jesus Christ is one with you in your nature—that He has suffered all that you are now suffering—that your pathway has been aforetime trod by His sacred feet—that the cup of which you drink is a cup which He has drained to the very bottom—that the river through which you pass is one through which He swam, and every wave and billow which rolls over your head did in old time roll over Him? Come! Are you ashamed to suffer what your Master suffered? Shall the disciple be above his Master, and the servant above his Lord? Shall He die upon a cross, and will not you bear the cross? Must He be crowned with thorns, and shall you be crowned with laurel? Is He to be pierced in hands and feet, and are your members to feel no pain? O cast away the fond delusion, I pray you, and look to Him who “endured the cross, despising the shame,” and be ready to endure and to suffer even as He did!

And now, behold our Master's humanity. Clothed even as ours has been since the fall, He comes not before us in the purple of a king, in the garb of the rich and the respectable, but He wears a garment in keeping with His apparent origin; He is a carpenter's son, and He wears a garment which becomes His station. View Him, you sons of poverty, as He stands before you in His seamless garment, the common dress of the peasant! And if you have this week felt the load of need—if you have suffered and are suffering this very day the ills connected with poverty, pluck up courage and find a consolation in the fact that Christ was poorer than you are—that He knew more of the bitterness of need than you can ever guess! You cannot say, “Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but I have not where to lay my head,” or if you could go as far as

that, you have never known a 40 day's fast. You have *some* comforts left to you—you know at least the sweet taste of bread to the hungry and of rest to the weary; but these things were often denied to Him. Look at Him, then, and see if there is not to you comfort in Christ.

We pass now, O Jesus, from Your robe of poverty to that scene of shame in which Your garments were torn from You, and You did hang naked before the sun! Children of God, if there is one place more than another where Christ becomes the joy and comfort of His people, it is where He plunged deepest into the depths of woe. Come, see Him, I pray you, in the garden of Gethsemane! Behold Him as His heart is so full of love that He cannot hold it in—so full of sorrow that it must find a vent. Behold the bloody sweat as it distils from every pore of His body, and falls in gouts of gore upon the frozen ground! See Him all red with His own blood—wrapped in a bloody mantle of His own gore! He is brought before Herod, and Pilate, and the Sanhedrin. See Him, now, as they scourge Him with their knotted whips, and bloody Him once more—as though it were not enough for Him to be dyed once in scarlet—but He must again be enwrapped in purple! See Him, I say, now that they have stripped Him naked! Behold Him as they drive the nails into His hands, and into His feet! Look up and see the sorrowful image of your sorrowful Lord. O look at Him as the ruby drops stand on the crown of thorns, and make it the blood-red diadem of the King of misery! O see Him as His bones are out of joint, and He is poured out like water, and brought into the dust of death. “Behold and see, was there ever sorrow like unto His sorrow that is done unto Him?” All you that pass by draw near and look upon this spectacle of grief! Behold the Emperor of woe, who never had an equal or a rival in His agonies! Come and see Him; and if I read not the words of consolation written in lines of blood all down His side, then

these eyes have never read a word in any book! If there is not consolation in a murdered Christ, there is no joy, no peace to any heart! If in that finished ransom price; if in that efficacious blood; if in that all-accepted sacrifice there is not joy, you harpers of heaven, there is no joy in you, and the right hand of God shall know no pleasures! I am persuaded, brothers and sisters, that we have only to sit more at the cross to be less troubled with our doubts, and our fears, and our woes. We have but to see *His* sorrows and lose *our* sorrows; we have but to see His wounds, and heal our own. If we would live, it must be by contemplation of His death; if we would rise to dignity, it must be by considering His humiliation and His sorrow—

“Lord, Your death and passion give
Strength and comfort in my need!
Every hour while here I live,
On Your love my soul shall feed.”

But come, troubled heart, and follow the dead body of your Master, for though dead, it is as full of consolation as when alive. It is now no more naked; the loving hands of Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus, and the Magdalene and the other Mary, have wrapped it in grave clothes and have laid it in the new tomb. Come, saints, not to weep, but to dry your tears! You have been your entire lifetime subject to fear of death—come, break your bonds asunder; be free from this fear! Where your Master sleeps, you may surely find an easy couch; what more could you desire than to lie upon the bed of your royal Solomon? The grave is now no more a morgue or a dark prison—*His* having entered it makes it a blessed retiring room, a sacred house in which the King's aromas purify their bodies—to make them fit for the embraces of their Lord! It becomes now, not the gate of annihilation, but the portal of

eternal bliss—a joy to be anticipated, a privilege to be desired. “Fearless we lay us in the tomb and sleep the night away, for You are here to break the gloom and call us back today.”

I am certain, brothers and sisters, that all the consolations which wise men can ever afford in a dying hour, will never be equal to that which is afforded by Jesus Christ ascending from the tomb! The maxims of philosophy, the endearments of affection, and the music of hope will be a very poor compensation for the light of Jesus’ grave! Death is the only mourner at Jesus’ tomb, and while the whole earth rejoices at the sorrow of its last enemy, I would be all too glad to die that I might know Him and the power of His resurrection! Heir of heaven, if you would be rid, once and for all, of every doubting thought about the hour of your dissolution, look, I pray you, to Christ risen from the dead! Put your finger into the print of the nails, and thrust your hand into His side and be not faithless, but believing! He *is* risen! He saw no corruption! The worms could not devour Him, and as Jesus Christ has risen from the dead, He has become the first fruits of them who slept. Inasmuch as He has risen, you shall rise! He has rolled the stone away, not for Himself, alone, but for you also! He has unwrapped the grave clothes not for His own sake, but for your sake, too! And you shall surely stand in the latter day upon the earth when *He* shall be here, and in your flesh you shall see God!

Time would fail us if we should attempt to track the Master in His glorious pathway after His resurrection. Let it suffice us briefly to observe that having led His disciples out unto a mountain where He had often delighted to commune with them, He was suddenly taken up from them, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. We think we may conjecture, by the help of Scripture, what transpired after that cloud had covered Him. Did not the angels—

“Bring His chariot from on high
To bear Him to His throne,
Clap their triumphant wings and cry,
His glorious work is done”?

Do you not see Him as He mounts His triumphal chariot—

“And angels chant the solemn lay,
Lift up your heads, you golden gates,
You everlasting doors give way”?

Behold angels gazing from the battlements of heaven, asking their comrades who escort the ascending Son of man, “Who is the King of Glory?” And this time, those who accompany the Master sing more sweetly, and more loudly than before, while they cry, “The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle! Lift up your heads, O you gates, and be you lifted up, you everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in.” And now the doors—

“Loose all their bars of massy light,
And wide unfold the radiant scene,”

and He enters. “He claims those mansions as His right,” and all the angels rise to “receive the King of Glory in.” Behold Him as He rides in triumph through heaven’s streets! See Death and hell bound at His chariot wheels! Listen to the “Hosannas” of the spirits of the just made perfect! Hear how cherubim and seraphim roll out in thunders, their everlasting song—“Glory be unto You! Glory be unto You, You Son of God, for You were slain, and You have redeemed the world by Your blood!” See Him as He mounts His throne and sits near His Father!

Behold the benignant complacency of the paternal Deity! Hear Him as He accepts Him, and gives Him a name which is above every name! And I say, my brothers and sisters, in the midst of your trembling, and doubts and fears, anticipate the joy which *you* shall have when you shall share in this triumph! Know you not, that you ascended up on high in Him? He went not up to heaven alone, but as the representative of all the blood-bought throng! *You* rode in that triumphal chariot with Him! You were exalted on high, and made to sit far above principalities and powers in Him; for we are risen in Him! We are exalted in Christ! Even at this very day, in Christ that Psalm is true—“You have put all things under His feet; You made Him to have dominion over all the works of Your hands.” Come, poor trembler, you are little in your own esteem, and but a worm and no man! Rise, I say, to the height of your nobility; for you are in Christ greater than angels are, more magnified and glorified by far! God give you grace—you who have faith—that you may now, in the fact of Jesus Christ’s exaltation, find consolation for yourself!

But now, today, I think I see the Master as He stands before His Father’s throne, dressed in the garments of a priest. Upon His breast I see the Urim and Thummim, glittering with the bejeweled remembrances of His people. In His hands I still see the remembrance of His sacrifice, the nail marks—and there, I still see upon His feet the impress of the laver of blood, in which He washed Himself, not as the priest of old with water, but with His own gore. I hear Him plead with authority before His Father’s face, “I will that they also whom You have given Me be with Me where I am.” O my poor prayers, you shall be heard! O my faint groans, you shall be answered! O my poor troubled soul, you are safe, for—

“Jesus pleads and must prevail,
His cause can never, never fail!”

Come, my poor heart, lift up yourself now from the dunghill; shake yourself from the dust—ungird your sackcloth, and put on your beautiful garments. *He* is our advocate today, our eloquent and earnest pleader, and He prevails with God. The Father smiles—He smiles on Christ; He smiles on *us* in answer to Jesus Christ's intercession. Is He not here also the consolation of Israel?

I only remark once more, that He who has gone up into heaven shall so come in like manner as He was seen to go up into heaven. He ascended in clouds, “Behold He comes with clouds.” He went up on high with sound of trumpet, and with shout of angels. Behold He comes! The silver trumpet shall soon sound. ‘Tis midnight—the hours are rolling wearily along; the virgins wise and foolish are all asleep. But the cry shall soon be heard—“Behold the bridegroom comes, go forth to meet Him.” That same Jesus, who was crucified, shall come in glory; the hands that were pierced shall grasp the scepter. Beneath His arm He shall gather up all the scepters of all kings; monarchs shall be the sheaves and *He* shall be the kingly reaper! On His head there shall be the many crowns of universal undisputed dominion. “He shall stand in the latter day upon the earth.” His feet shall tread on the mount of Olivet, and His people shall be gathered in the valley of Jehoshaphat. Lo, the world's great battle is almost begun; the trumpet sounds the beginning of the battle of Armageddon. To the fight, you warriors of Christ! To the fight, for it is your last conflict, and over the bodies of your foes you shall rush to meet your Lord—He fighting on the one side by His coming—you on the other side by drawing near to Him! You shall meet Him in the solemn hour of victory. The dead in Christ shall rise first, and you who are alive and remain

shall be changed in a moment—in the twinkling of an eye—at the last triumphant sounding of the dread tremendous trumpet! *Then* shall you know to the full, how Christ can console you for all your sorrows—all your shame and all your neglect, which you have received from the hand of men. Yes, today there awaits the recompense of an earthly splendor for your earthly poverty—there awaits earthly dignity for your earthly shame! You shall not only have spiritual, but you shall have *temporal* blessings. He who takes away the curse, will take it away not only from your soul, but from the very ground on which you tread. He who redeems you, shall redeem not only your spirit, but your body! Your eyes shall *see* your Redeemer; your hands shall be lifted up in acclamation, and your feet shall bear your leaping joys in the procession of His glory. In your very body, in which you have suffered for Him, you shall sit with Him upon the throne and judge the nations of the earth! These things, I say, are all full of the purest and highest consolation to the children of God.

II. Having taken nearly all my time upon the first point, I can only say a word or two upon the second and on the third. The second point was to be this—**CHRIST IN HIS UNCHANGING NATURE**—a consolation for our continual sorrows.

Christ is to His people a *surpassing* consolation. Talk of the consolations of philosophy? We have all the philosopher can pretend to; but we have it in a higher degree. Speak of the charms of music which can lull our sorrows to a blessed sleep?—

“Sweeter sounds than music knows,
Charm us in our Savior’s name!
Jesus, the very thought of You,
With rapture fills my breast.”

Speak we of the joys of friendship? And sweet they are, indeed; but “There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother”—“A brother born for adversity.” There is one who is better than all friends, more able to cheer than those who are dearest and nearest to our hearts. Or, speak we of the joys of hope? And certainly hope can console us when nothing else can do it. *He* is our hope! We cast the anchor of our hope into that which is within the veil, where the forerunner has for us entered. The consolations of Christ are unrivalled by any which can be offered by wit, by wisdom, by mirth, by hope itself. They are incomparable, and can never be surpassed!

Again, the consolations of Christ, from the feet of His unchanging nature, are *unfailing*—

“When every earthly prop gives way,
He still is all our strength and stay.”

Look at Job, and see the picture of how Christ can console! The messenger rushes in—“The Sabeans have taken away the oxen and the asses!” “Well, well,” Job might console himself, and say, “but the sheep are left.” “But the fire of God has fallen on the sheep! And the Chaldeans have carried away the camels and slain the servants!” “Alas,” the good man might say, “but my children are left, and if they are spared, then I can still have joy.” “The wind has come from the wilderness and smitten the four corners of the house and all your sons and daughters are dead!” Ah, penniless and childless, the patriarch might weep! But, looking on his wife, he would say, “There still remains one sweet comforter, my wellbeloved spouse.” *She* bids him, “Curse God and die,” speaking as one of the foolish women speaks. Yet might Job say, “Though my wife has failed me, there remains at least three friends. There they sit with me on the dunghill, and *they* will console me.” But they speak bitterness

till he cries, “Miserable comforters are you all!” Well, at least he has his own body in health, has he not? No. He sits down upon a dunghill and scrapes himself with a potsherd—for his sores have become intolerable. Well, well, “Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has will he give for his life.” He may at least cheer himself with the fact that he lives. “Why should a living man complain?” Yes, but he fears he is about to die. And now comes out the grandeur of his hope—“I know that my Redeemer lives, and though the worms devour this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.” All the other windows are darkened; but the sun shines in at the window of redemption! All the other doors are shut, but this great door of hope and joy still stands wide open! All other wells are dry, but this flows with an unceasing stream! Brothers and sisters—when all things else depart—an *unchanging* Christ shall be your unchanging joy!

Furthermore, the consolations of Christ are *all powerful* consolations. When a poor soul is so deep in the mire that you cannot lift it with the lever of eloquence, nor draw it up with the hands of sympathy, nor raise it with wings of hope, *He* can touch it with His finger and it can spring up from the mire, and put its feet upon a rock, and feel the new song in its mouth, and its goings well established. There is no form of melancholy which will not yield before the grace of God; there is no shape of distress which will not give way before the divine energy of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, when He uses Christ as the consolation.

Again—this consolation is *everlasting* consolation. It consoled you, O aged sire, when as a youth you gave your heart to Christ; it was your joy in the mid-winter of your manhood; it has become your strength and your song in the days of your old age. When tottering on your staff you shall go down to Jordan’s brink, then He will be your consolation; in the prospect of your coming dissolution, yes, when you walk

through the valley of the shadow of death, you shall fear no evil, for He is with you—His rod and His staff shall comfort you! All other things shall pass away as a dream when one awakes; but this substantial support shall abide with you in the midst of the swellings of Jordan, in the hour of the departure of your spirit from your body.

And then, remember that He is the consolation which is always within the believer's reach. He is "a very present help in time of trouble." You may always cheer your heart with Christ when other things are far away. When friends visit you not, and your chamber becomes lonely—when spouse has forgotten to speak a kind word to you, and children have become ungrateful—He will make your bed in your sickness. He will be your never-failing friend and abide with you in every dark and gloomy hour, till He brings you into His dear arms, where you will be in heaven forever and ever!

III. I close now with my last point—the grave and serious question, **IS CHRIST AN AVAILABLE CONSOLATION FOR ME?**

Who are you, friend? Are you one who needs no consolation? Have you a righteousness of your own? Let me put it in your own words. You are a *good* man, kind to the poor, charitable, upright, generous, and holy. You believe there may be *some* faults in yourself, but they must be very few, and you trust that what with your own merits, and with God's mercy, you may enter heaven. In the name of God, I do solemnly assure you that Christ is *not* an available consolation for you! Christ will have *nothing* to do with you as long as you have *anything* to do with yourself. If you are trusting in any measure whatever, upon anything that you have ever *done* or hope *to do*, you are trusting in a *lie*, and Christ will never be friends with a lie! He will never help *you* to do what He came to do Himself. If you will take His work as it is, as a *finished* work—well and good—but if you must add to it your own, God shall add unto

you the plagues which are written in this Book! He shall by no means give to you any of the promises and the comforts which Christ can afford.

But instead thereof, I will suppose that I address myself this morning to a man who says, “I was once, I think, a believer in Christ. I made a profession of religion, but I fell from it, and I have lost for years all the hope and joy I ever had. I think I was a presumptuous man, that I pretended to have what I never had, and yet at the time I really thought I had it. May I think that there is consolation in Christ for a backslider and a traitor like I? Often, sir, do I feel as if the doom of Judas must be mine—as if I must perish miserably, like Demas, who loved this present world.” Ah, backslider, backslider, God speaks to you this morning, and He says, “Return you backsliding children of men, for I am married to you.” And if married, there has never been a divorce between Christ and you! Has He put you away? Unto which of His creditors has He sold you? Where do you read in His Word that He has divided from the affection of His heart one whose name was ever written in His Book? Come, come, backslider, come again to the cross! He who received you once, will receive you again! Come where the blood is flowing; the blood that washed you once, can wash you yet once more! Come, come, you are naked and poor, and miserable; the raiment which was given to you once shall array you again with beauty; the unsearchable riches which were opened up to you before, shall be yours again—

“To your Father’s bosom pressed,
Once again a child confessed,
From His hand no more to roam,
Come, backsliding sinner, come.”

But I hear another say, “I am not a backslider, but simply one who desires to be saved. I can honestly say I would give my right arm from its socket if I might but be saved. Why, sir, if I had 10,000 worlds, I would freely cast them away as pebble stones and worthless if I might but find Christ.” Poor soul, and does the devil tell you you shall never have Christ? Why you have a warrant to lay hold on Christ today! “No,” you say, “I have no right whatever.” The fact that you say you have no right should at least comfort the minister in addressing himself freely to you; the right of a sinner to come to Christ does not lie in the sinner, nor in any feelings which the sinner may have had—it lies in the fact that Christ *commands* him to come! If one of you should receive as you went out of yonder door, a command to go at once to Windsor and have an interview with the Queen—as soon as you had received the order, and were sure it came from her, you might say, “Well, but if I had known this, I would have put on other clothes.” But the order is peremptory, “Come now. Come just as you are.” You would, I think, without any very great doubt, though greatly wondering, take your place and ride there at once! When you came to the gate, some tall grenadier might ask you what you were doing. “Why,” he might say, “you are not fit to come and see Her Majesty. You are not a gentleman; you have not so many hundreds a year; how can *you* expect to be admitted?” You show the command, and he lets you pass on. You come to another door, and there is an usher there. “You are not in a court dress,” he says. “You are not properly robed for the occasion.” You show the command, and he lets you pass on. But suppose when at last you should come into the ante-room, you should say, “Now I dare not go in; I am not fit. I feel I shall not know how to behave myself”? Suppose you are silly enough not to go—you would be disobedient, and 10 times more foolish in disobeying than you could have been by any blunders

in behavior if you had obeyed! Now it is just so with you today. Christ says, “Come unto Me.” He does not merely invite you, because He knows you would think you did not deserve the invitation, but He gives the *command*, and He bids me say to you, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you.” He bids me command you in His name, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” Of His grace and mercy, He puts it as a command! “*But*,” you say—ah, what right have you to say, “*but*” to the Lord’s commands? Again, I say, away with your “buts!” What right have you to be “butting” at His laws and His commands? “But,” you say, “do hear me for a moment.” I will hear you then. “Sir, I cannot imagine that if such a hard-hearted sinner as I am were really to trust Christ, I would be saved.” The English of that is that you call God a liar! He says you shall be, and do you think He speaks an untruth? “Ah!” says another, “but it is too good to be true! I cannot believe that just as I am, if I trust in Christ, my sin shall be forgiven.” Again, I say, the simple English of that is that you think you know better than God, and so you do, in fact, stand up and say to His promise, “You are false.” He says, “He who comes unto Me, I will in no wise cast out.” “Ah!” you say, “but that does not mean *me*!” Can any language speak more plainly? “*He*.” What “he”? Why, any “he” or “she” in the world!

“Yes,” says one, “but the invitations are made to *character*—‘Come unto Me, all you who labor and are *heavy laden*.’ I am afraid I am not heavy laden enough.” Yes, but you will mark while the invitation is given to character, yet the *promise* is not given to the character—it is given to those who come—“Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.” And while that one invitation may be confined to the weary and heavy laden, yet there are scores of others who stand as wide and free as the very air we breathe! If you have that qualification, do not come even with it, because you are unqualified when you *think* you

are qualified—you are unfit when you *think* you are fit! And if you have a *sense of need* which you think makes you fit to come to Christ—it shows you are *not fit*, and do not know your need—for no man knows his need till he thinks he does not know his need, and no man is in a right state to come to Christ till he thinks he is *not* in a right state to come to Christ! But he who feels that he has not one good thought or one good feeling to recommend him—*he is the man who may come!* He who says, “But I may not come,” is the very man that is bid to come! Besides, my friends, it is not what *you think*, or what *I think*—it is what Christ *says*, and is it not written by the hand of the Apostle John, “This is the commandment, that you believe on Jesus Christ whom He has sent”? Men who say it is not the duty of sinners to believe, I cannot think what they make out of such a text as that—“This is the commandment, that you believe on Jesus Christ, whom He has sent.” Nor that one where God expressly says, “He who believes not is condemned already, *because* he believes not.” Why, I should think I was addressing heathens if I addressed a company of men who thought that God did not command men to repent; for Scripture is so plain upon the point and I say—if God commands you to do it—you may do it! Let the devil say, “No,” but God says, “Yes.” Let him stand and push you back; but say to him, “No, Satan, no, I come here in God’s name.” And as devils fear and fly before the name of Christ, so will Satan and your fears all fly before His command. He *commands* you to believe—that is, to trust Him! Trust him, soul, trust Him! Right or wrong, trust Him.

But some of you need a great temptation and a great deal of despair before you will trust Him. Well, the Lord will send it to you if you will not trust Him without it! I remember John Bunyan said he had a black temptation, and it did him a great deal of good—for, he said, “Before I had the temptation, I

always questioned God's promises saying, 'May I come, or may I not come?' Yes, often I felt as if the Lord would refuse my soul forever—I was often as if I had run upon the pike, and as if the Lord had thrust at me, to keep me from Him as with a flaming sword." Ah, and perhaps you may be driven to that. I pray you may! But I would infinitely rather that the sweet love and grace of God would entice you now to trust Jesus Christ just as you are. He will not deceive you, sinner; He will not fail you! Trusting Him, you shall build on a sure foundation, and find Him who is the consolation of Israel, and the joy of all His saints!

349 THE WAILING OF RISCA – JER. 4:20

**A Sermon
Delivered on Sabbath Morning, December 9th, 1860,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At Exeter Hall, Strand**

“Suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment.”—Jeremiah 4:20

THE SORROW of the weeping prophet was exceedingly heavy when he uttered these words of bitter lamentation. A great and present burden from the Lord is weighing so heavily upon our hearts this morning that we cannot spare as much as a moment for sympathy with the griefs of past ages. God has visited our land, and His strokes have been exceedingly hard. We are compelled to take up a wailing and cry aloud, “Suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment.” There is a spot in South Wales which has frequently yielded me a quiet and delightful retreat. Beautiful for situation, surrounded by lofty mountains, pierced by romantic valleys—the breathing of its air refreshes the body, and the sight of the eyes makes glad the heart. I have climbed its hills; I have seen the ever-widening landscape: the mountains of Wales, the plains of England, and the seas sparkling afar. I have descended the hills and marked the mist creeping up the side of the hills, and covering the woods in clouds. I have mingled with its godly men and women, and worshipped God in their assemblies. These lips have ministered the Word in that once happy valley. I have been fired with the glorious enthusiasm of the people when they

have listened to the Word. Well does my soul remember one night which I shall never forget in time or in eternity, when, crowded together in the place of worship, hearty Welsh miners responded to every word of Christ's minister with their, "gogoniants," encouraging me to preach the gospel, and crying, "glory to God" while the message was proclaimed. I remember how they compelled me, and kept me well nigh to midnight, preaching three sermons, one after another, almost without rest—for they loved to listen to the gospel! God was present with us, and many a time has the baptismal pool been stirred since then by the fruit of that night's labor. Nor shall I ever forget when standing in the open air beneath God's blue sky, I addressed a mighty gathering within a short distance of that spot. The Spirit of God was poured upon us, and men and women were swayed to and fro under the heavenly message as the corn is moved in waves by the summer winds. Great was our joy that day when the people met together in thousands, and with songs and praises separated to their homes, talking of what they had heard. But now, our visitation of that neighborhood must always be mingled with sorrow. How has God been pleased to smite down strong men, and to take away the young men all of a sudden! "How suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment." Oh, valley of Risca, I take up a lamentation for you— the Lord has dealt sorely with you; behold and see if there is sorrow in any valley like unto your sorrow which is done unto you. The angel of death has emptied out his quiver upon you; the awful reaper has gathered to him full sheaves from your beautiful valley!

You all know the story—it scarcely needs that I should tell it to you. Last Saturday week, some 200 or more miners descended in health and strength to their usual work in the bowels of the earth. They had not been working long—their wives and their children had risen and their little ones had gone

to their schools, when suddenly there was heard a noise at the mouth of the pit—it was an explosion—all knew what it meant. Men's hearts failed them, for well they prophesied the horror which would soon reveal itself. They wait awhile—the foul gas must first be scattered—brave men with their lives in their hands descend into the pit, and when they are able to see with the dim miner's lamp, the light falls upon corpse after corpse. A few, a handful are brought up alive, but scarcely alive, but yet, thank God, with enough of the vital spark remaining to be again kindled to a flame. But the great mass of those strong men have felt the grip of death. Some of them were brought up to the top with their faces burned and scarred, with their bodies disfigured by the fire; but many are discovered whose faces looked as if they sweetly slept, so that it was scarcely possible to believe that they really could be dead, so quietly had the spirit quitted the habitation of clay. Can you picture to yourselves the scene? The great fires lit around the pit flaming both night and day, the thick mist, the pouring rain drenching the whole of the valley? Do you see the women as they come clustering round the pit, shrieking for their sons, and their husbands, and their fathers? Do you hear that shrill scream as yonder woman has just discovered the partner of her soul? And there do you mark another bending over the form of her two stalwart sons, now, alas, taken from her forever? Do you mark the misery that sits upon the face of some who have not found their sons, or their fathers, or their husbands, or their brothers, and who know not where they are, and feel a thousand deaths, themselves, because they feel convinced that their precious ones have fallen, though their corpses cannot be found? The misery in that valley is past description—those who have witnessed it fail to be able to picture it. As the cry of Egypt in the night, when the destroying angel went through all the land, and smote the firstborn; as the wail of Rachel when she could

not be comforted for her children, because they were not—such has been the howling, the weeping, the lamentation of that fair but desolate valley!

My friends, this judgment has a voice to us, and the scarcely buried bodies of those men which lie around us in vision have each a sorrowful lesson. The cry of the widow, and of the childless mother shall come up into our ears today and, O Lord God of Sabaoth, may it so awaken us that we may hear, and fear, and tremble, and turn unto You—that this dread calamity may be to us the means of our salvation, or if saved, the means of stirring us up more earnestly to seek the salvation of our fellow men!

There are three points upon which I shall try to address you this morning, though I feel inadequate to such a task. First, I shall say somewhat upon *sudden bereavements*. Then, I shall dwell awhile upon the fact of *sudden death*. And afterwards, we will say but a little, for we know but little, of the *sudden exchange* which sudden death shall bring both to saints and sinners.

I. Our first sorrowful theme is SUDDEN BEREAVEMENTS.

Alas! Alas! How soon may we be childless! How soon may we be widowed of the dearest objects of our affections! O Lord, You have shown to us this day how soon You can blast our gourds, and wither all the fruits of our vineyard. The dearest ones, the partners of our blood—how soon can death proclaim a divorce between us—our children, the offspring of our loins, how soon can You lay them beneath the sod. We have not a single relative who may not become to us within the next moment a fountain of grief. All who are dear and precious to us are only here by God's good pleasure. What should we be today if it were not for those whom we love and who love us? What was our house without its little prattlers? What was our habitation without the wife of our bosom? What were our daily business without our associates and friends to cheer us in our

trials? Ah, this were a sad world, indeed, if the ties of kindred, of affection, and of friendship all were snapped; and yet, it is such a world that they could be taken away at any moment.

From the fact that sudden bereavements are possible—not only to miners, and to women whose husbands are upon the sea, but *to us also*—I would that we would learn profitable lessons. And first, let us *learn to set loose our dearest friends* who we have on earth. Let us love them—love them we may, love them we should—but let us always learn to love them as dying things! Oh, build not your nest on any of these trees, for they are all marked for the axe! “Set not your affections on things on earth,” for the things of earth *will* leave you, and then, what will you do when your joy is emptied, and the golden bowl which held your mirth shall be dashed to pieces? Love first and foremost, Christ; and when you love others, still love them not as though they were immortal. Love not clay as though it were undying—love not dust as though it were eternal. So hold your friend that you shall not wonder when he vanishes from you; so view the partakers of your life that you will not be amazed when they glide into the land of spirits. See you the disease of mortality on every cheek, and write not *Eternal* upon the creature of an hour.

Take care that you put all your dear ones into God's hands. You have put *your* soul there, put *them* there. You can trust Him for temporals for yourself, trust your jewels with Him. Feel that they are not your own, but that they are God's loans to you—loans which may be recalled at any moment—precious gifts of heaven of which you are but a tenant at will. Your possessions are never as safe as when you are willing to give them up, and you are never as rich as when you put all you have into the hands of God. You shall find it greatly mitigates the sorrow of bereavements, if, before bereavement, you shall have learned to surrender each day all the things that are dearest to you into the keeping of your gracious God. Further, then, you who are

blessed with wife and children, and friends, take care that you bless God for them! Sing a song of praise to God who has blessed you so much more than others. You are not a widow, but there are many who wear the weeds, and why is it not your lot? You are not bereaved of your spouse, but there is many a man whose heart is torn in two by such a calamity—why is it not your portion, too? You have not to follow, tomorrow, your little ones to their narrow graves—early flowers that did but bud, and never ripened, withering alas, too soon. Oh, by the sorrow which you would feel if they were taken away, I exhort you to bless God for them while you have them! We sorrow much when our gifts are taken away, but we fail to thank God that He spared them to us for so long. Oh, be not ungrateful lest you provoke the Lord to smite very low the mercy which you do not value! Sing unto the Lord, sing unto His name; give unto Him the blessing which He deserves for His sparing favors which He has manifested towards you in your household.

And then, permit me to remind you that since these sudden bereavements may come, and there may be a dark chamber in any house in a moment, and the coffin may be in any one of our habitations, let us so act to our kinsfolk and relatives as though we knew they were soon about to die. Young man, so treat your father as you would if you knew he would die tomorrow; when you shall follow him to the grave, amidst all your tears for his loss, let there not be one tear of repentance because of your ill behavior to him. And you godly fathers and mothers, to you I have a special message—your children are committed to your care—they are growing up, and what if after they are grown up, they should plunge into sin and die at last impenitent? Oh, let not the fierce regret sting you like an adder; “oh, that I had prayed for my children; oh, that I had taught them before they departed.” I pray you so live that when you stand over your child’s dead body; you may never hear a voice

coming up from that clay, “Father, your negligence was my destruction! Mother, your lack of prayer was the instrument of my damnation!” But so live that when you hear the funeral knell, even for a neighbor, you may be able to say, “Poor soul, whether he is gone to heaven or to hell, I know I am clear of his blood.” And with double earnestness be it so with your children! “Yes,” says one “but I have thought of teaching my children more of Christ and being more earnest in prayer for them, bye-and-by.” But what if they should die tomorrow? “Yes,” says the wife, “I have thought of speaking to my ungodly husband, and trying to induce him to attend the House of God with me, but I was afraid he would only laugh at me, so I put it off for a month or two.” Ah, what if he dies before you have cleared your conscience of him? Oh, my brothers and sisters in Christ, if sinners will be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our bodies! And if they will perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees, imploring them to stay, and not madly to destroy themselves! If hell must be filled, at least let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions, and let not one go there unwarned and unprayed for!

In the light, then, of sudden bereavements, let not another hour pass over your head, when you have reached home, before you have freed your conscience of the blood of your children's souls! Gather them together around you this afternoon, and say to them, “My dear children, I have learned today that you may die. I knew it before, but I have had it impressed upon my mind by a solemn incident. My dear children, I cannot help telling you that as you will die, I am anxious that God's Holy Spirit should graciously lead you to repent of sin and seek a Savior.” And then, when you have told them the way to salvation in simple terms, put your arms about their necks, and bid the little ones kneel down and pray, “O God! Upon their infant hearts, stamp the image of Yourself. As

they are in the image of the earthy, so make them in the image of the heavenly, that at the last I may be able to say, ‘Here am I, and the children You have given me.’”

II. The second head of my discourse this morning was to be, **SUDDEN DEATH, AS WE VIEW IT MORE PARTICULARLY IN RELATION TO OURSELVES.**

The miners of Risca had no more idea of dying that Saturday morning than you or I have—nor did there seem much likelihood that they would. They had gone up and down the pit, some of them, many thousands of times in their lives. It is true that some had perished there, but then, how very many had gone up and down, and had not perished? No, they had grown so fearless of danger, that some of them even thrust themselves into it in defiance of every regulation for the preservation of human life! They were bold and careless, and would gratify a selfish indulgence when a spark might have caused the destruction of them all. We will not say that it was any negligence that caused this accident; God forbid that we should lay anything to the charge of those who have now departed, and have to answer before their God—but, at any rate, it is sure that men who have most to do with danger are generally the most callous, and those who are most exposed, are usually utterly careless about the very danger which others see, but which they will not see themselves. Any warning you or I might have given them would have been thought unnecessary, if not impertinent. “Why need I be so careful? I have done this 50 times before; why may I not do it again?” But as in a moment, although there was no lightning flash, no earthquake, no opening of a pit to swallow them up—in a moment the gas explodes—and they stand before the Eternal God! It was but the twinkling of an eye—as though the last trumpet had sounded, (and indeed, it did sound as far as they were concerned), and down fell the lifeless corpse and the spirit

returned to God who made it! And you and I are in danger, too. We are not in the pit in the midst of explosive air, but there are a thousand gates to death! How many there are who have fallen dead in the streets? How many sitting in their own homes? I stayed, but a week or two ago, with an excellent Christian man who was then in the best, and most hearty health. I was startled, indeed, when I heard immediately after, that he had come home, and sitting down in his chair, had shut his eyes and died! And these things are usual, and in such a city as ours we cannot go down a street without hearing of some such visitation! Well, our turn must come. Perhaps we shall die falling asleep in our beds after a long sickness. But probably we shall be suddenly called in such an hour as we think not, to face the realities of eternity. Well, if it is so, if there are a thousand gates to death, if all means and any means may be sufficient to stop the current of our life; if really, after all, spiders' webs and bubbles are more substantial things than human life—if we are but a vapor, or a dying taper that soon expires in darkness—what then?

Why, first, I say, let us all look upon ourselves as dying men; let us not reckon on tomorrow! Oh, let us not procrastinate, for taken in Satan's great net of procrastination, we may wait and wait, and wait, till time is gone, and the great knell of eternity shall toll our dissolution! Today is your only time, O mortal men; the present moment is the only moment you may call your own, and oh, how swift its wings! This hour is yours—yesterday is gone—tomorrow is with God, and may never come! "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Many have had their first impressions from thoughts of death, and hence it is that Satan never likes to let a man think of the grave. I know a family in which the governess, the daughter of a Christian minister, was told upon her entering her office that she was never to mention the subject of death to the children. They were never to know that children might die! I

did not marvel when I knew the infidelity of the head of the household—what better atmosphere for an infidel to breathe in than where the blast of death is never felt? Infidels ought to be immortal; they ought to live in a world where they can never die—for their infidelity will never be able to pass the stream of Jordan! There are infidels on earth, but there are none in heaven, and there can be none in hell! They are all convinced—convinced by terrible facts—convinced that there is a God while they are crushed beneath His vengeance, and made to tremble at His eternal power! But I pray you, brothers and sisters, be not such fools as to live as though your bones were iron, and your ribs were brass. Let us not be such madmen as to run as though there were no bounds to our race; let us not play away our precious days as though days were common as sands on a seashore! That hourglass yonder contains all the sands of your life. Do you see them running? How swiftly do they empty out! With some of you, the most of the sands are in the bottom bulb of the glass, and there are only a few to go trickling through the narrow passages of its days. Ah, and that glass shall never be turned again—it shall never run a second time for you. Let it once run out, and you will die! Oh, live as though you meant to die! Live as though you knew you might die tomorrow! Think as though you might die now, and act this very hour as though I could utter the mandate of death, and summon you to pass through the portals of the tomb!

And then, take care, I pray you that you who know Christ not only live as though you meant to die, but live while you live. Oh, what a work we have to do, and how short the time to do it in! Millions of unconverted men, and nothing but our feeble voice with which to preach the Word! My soul, shall you ever condemn yourself in your dying moments for having preached too often, or too earnestly? No, never! You may rebuke your sloth—but you can never bemoan your excessive industry!

Minister of Christ! In your dying hour, it will never be a theme of reproach to you, that you preached ten times in the week—that you stood up every day to preach Christ, and that you so preached that you spent yourself, and wasted your body with weakness. No, it will be our dull sermons that will haunt us on our dying beds, our tearless preaching, our long studying, when we might have preached better had we come away and preached without them. Our hunting after popularity, by gathering together fine words, instead of coming right up and saying to the people, “Men and women, you are dying, escape for your life and fly to Christ”—preaching to them in red-hot simple words of the wrath to come, and of the Love of Christ! Oh, there are some of you members of our churches—who are living—but what are you living for? Surely you are not living to get money—that is the worldling’s objective! Are you living merely to please yourselves? Why that is but the beast’s delight! Oh, how few there are of the members of our churches who really live for God with all their hearts! Do we give to God as much as we give to our own pleasures? Do we give Christ’s service as much time as we give many of our trifling amusements? Why, we have professional men of education, men of excellent training and ability—who when they once get into a church, feel that they could be very active anywhere else—but as Christians they have nothing to do! They can be energetic in parish vestries, or in the rifle corps, but in the church, they give their name, but their energies are dormant. Ah, my dear hearers, you who love the Savior, when we shall come before Christ in heaven, if there can be a regret, it will be that we did not do more for Christ while we were here! I think as we fall down before His feet, and worship Him, if we could know a sorrow, it would be because we did not bring Him in more jewels for His crown—did not seek more to feed the hungry, or to clothe the naked—did not give more to His cause,

and did not labor more that the lost sheep of the house of Israel might be restored. Live while you live! While it is called today, work, for the night comes wherein no man can work.

And let us learn never to do anything which we would not wish to be found doing if we were to die. We are sometimes asked by young people whether they may go to the theater, whether they may dance, or whether they may do this or that. You may do *anything* which you would not be ashamed to be doing when Christ shall come! You may do anything which you would not blush to be found doing if the hand of death should smite you! But if you would dread to die in any spot, do not go there. If you would not wish to enter the presence of your God with such-and-such a word upon your lips, utter not that word. Or if there would be a thought that would be uncongenial to the Judgment Day, seek not to think that thought! So act that you may feel you can take your shroud with you wherever you go. Happy is he who dies in his pulpit! Blessed is the man who dies in his daily business, for he is found with his loins girt about him, serving his Master. But, oh, unhappy must he be to whom death comes as an intruder, and finds him engaged in that which he will blush to have ever touched when God shall appear in judgment! Power supreme; You everlasting King—permit not death to intrude upon an ill-spent hour—but find me rapt in high meditation—hymning my great Creator—proclaiming the love of Jesus, or lifting up my heart in prayer for myself and my fellow sinners! Let me but serve my God and then, Death, I will not say to you when you may come—come when you will. But if I might choose, come to me while I am yearning after souls! Come to me when the cry of inviting love is on my lips, and when I am weeping over the souls of men! Come to me, then, that men may say—

“He did his body with his charge lay down,
He ceased at once to work and live.”

But I may talk thus about sudden death and the likelihood of it, but ah, sirs, I cannot stir your hearts, for I cannot stir my own as I would! The fact that so many die each day has very little force in it for us, because it is so trite an event—we have heard of it so many times. We look down the catalog of deaths, and take the average and we say, “Fifty below the average, or a hundred above the average,” but *our* dying never comes home to us. All men will persist in thinking all men mortal but themselves. If there were a great Hydra in the city of London which every day ate 10 of the inhabitants of London alive, we should be dreadfully miserable—especially if we never knew when it would be our turn to be eaten! If we were certain that it would eat all in London, by-and-by, but would only eat 10 in a week, we should all tremble as we passed by the huge monster’s den, and say, “When will it be my time?” And that would cast a cloud over the whole metropolis, blacker than its usual fog. But here is a monster, Death, which devours its hundreds at its meal; and with its iron tongue, the funeral knell keeps crying out for more! Its greedy and insatiable appetite is never filled; its teeth are never blunted; its ravenous hunger is never stayed—and here we are, and though it will be our turn, by-and-by, to be devoured of this great monster—yet how little do we think about it? One reason, I think, is because we so seldom visit the dying. I once stood by the side of a poor boy whom I had taught as a Sunday school teacher; he had received very little good training at home, and though he was but a lad of seventeen, he became a drunkard, and drank himself to death at one debauch. I saw him, and talked to him, and tried to point him to the Savior. And I heard, at last, the death-rattle in his throat; and as I went downstairs, I thought everybody a

fool for doing anything except preparing to die. I began to look upon the men who drove the carts in the street—the men who were busy at their shops, and those who were selling their wares—as being all foolish for doing anything except their eternal business—and myself most of all foolish for not pointing dying sinners to a living Christ, and inviting them to trust in His precious blood! And yet in an hour or so, all things took their usual shape, and I began to think that I was not dying, after all, and I could go away and be, I fear, as heartless as before. I could begin to think that men were, after all, wise in thinking of this world and not the next. I mean not that I really thought so, but I fear I acted as if I thought so! The impression of the deathbed was soon obliterated. If you could see all die who die, perhaps the impression would be different. I would liken the sons of men to a company of South Sea Islanders, whose canoe, being disabled, floated upon a raft, and they were attacked by sharks. They disappeared one by one, till but three or four were left. Can you conceive the despair which would settle upon the countenance of these few? If they knew a god, do you not think they would then, indeed, call on him? And in what respect, except that death was more apparent to them, were they different from us? Man after man is being taken away from us by the devouring monster; friends and kinsfolk have been snatched into the deep, and some of us remain upon the edge of the raft. Yon gray-haired man may be the next who is carried away. The hosts of God are crossing the flood! Some have already passed it, and are singing the eternal song, and—

“We are to the margin come,
And soon expect to die.”

God help us so to live in the expectation of death, that Christ may be glorified in us whether we sleep or wake, and

that we may be able to say, “For me to live is Christ, to die is gain.”

III. I shall detain you but a few minutes longer, while I dwell upon the third theme, which is, **THAT SUDDEN EXCHANGE WHICH A SUDDEN DEATH WILL CAUSE.**

You see yonder Christian—he is full of a thousand fears—he is afraid even of his interest in Christ! He is troubled spiritually, and vexed with temporal cares; you see him cast down and exceedingly troubled, his faith but very weak. He steps outside yon door, and there meets him a messenger from God who smites him to the heart, and he is dead. Can you conceive the change? Death has cured him of his fears; his tears are wiped away, once and for all, from his eyes. And, to his surprise, he stands where he feared he should never be—in the midst of the redeemed of God, in the general assembly and church of the first-born! If he should think of such things, would he not upbraid himself for thinking so much of his trials and of his troubles, and for looking into a future which he was never to see? See yonder man, he can scarcely walk; he has a hundred pains in his body; he says he is more tried and pained than any man. Death puts his skeleton hand upon him and he dies. How marvelous the change! No aches now, no casting down of spirit; he then is supremely blest, the decrepit has become perfect, the weak has become strong, the trembling one has become a David, and David has become as the angel of the Lord! Listen to the song which pours from the lips of him who just now groaned! Look at the celestial smile which lights the features of the man just now racked with pain, and tormented with anguish! Was ever change so surprising, so marvelous? When I think of it, I could almost long for it to come across myself this morning! To go from the thousand eyes of you who look upon me, to look into the eyes of Christ, and to go from your songs, to the songs of spirits before the

throne; to leave the Sabbath work on earth for an eternal Sabbath of rest—to go from unbelieving hearts, from Christians who need to be cheered, and sinners who need to be convinced—to be with those who need no preaching, but who in one eternal song sing, “Hallelujah to God and the Lamb!” I can imagine that when a man dies thus suddenly, one of the first emotions he experiences in the next world will be *surprise*. I can conceive that the spirit knows not where it is; it is like a man waking up from a dream; he looks about him. Oh, that glory! How resplendent yon throne! He listens to harps of gold, and he can scarcely believe it true. “I, the chief of sinners, and yet in heaven! I, a doubting one, and yet in paradise?” And then when he is conscious that he is really in heaven, oh, what *overwhelming joy*—how is the spirit flooded with delight, covered over with it—scarcely able to enjoy it because it seems to be all but crushed beneath the eternal weight of glory! And next, when the spirit has power to recover itself, and open its eyes from the blindness caused by this dazzling light of God and to think—when its thoughts have recovered themselves from the sudden effect of a tremendous flood of bliss—the next emotion will be *gratitude*. See how that believer, five minutes ago a mourner, now takes his crown from off his head, and with transporting joy and gratitude bows before his Savior’s throne! Hear how he sings! Was ever song like that, the first song he ever sang that had the fullness of paradise and perfection in it?—“Unto Him that loved me, and washed me from my sins in His blood, unto Him be glory.” And how he repeats it, and repeats it again, and looks round to cherubim and seraphim and prays them to assist him in his song, till all the harps of heaven, re-taught the melody of gratitude, re-tuned by the one faithful heart, send up another hallelujah, and yet another and another— while the floods of harmony surround the eternal throne of God!

But what must be the change to the unconverted man? His joys are over forever; his death is the death of his happiness—his funeral is the funeral of his mirth. He has just risen from his cups; he has another cup to drain which is full of bitterness. He has just listened to the sound of the harp, and the violin, and the music of those who make merry. An eternal dirge greets his ears, mixed with the doleful chorus of the shrieks of damned souls! What horror and surprise shall seize upon him! “Good God,” he says, “I thought it was not so, but lo, it is! What the minister said to me is true; the things I would not believe are at last really so.” When the poor soul shall find itself in the hands of angry fiends, and lifts up his eyes in hell, being in torment so hot, so feverish, so thirsty, that it shall seem in that first moment as though it had been athirst for a million years, what will be his surprise! “And am I,” he will say, “really here? I was in the streets of London but a minute ago; I was singing a song but an instant before, and here am I in hell! What? So soon damned? Is the sentence of God like a lightning flash? Does it so instantaneously give the spirit and destroy its joys? Am I really here?” And when the soul has convinced itself that it is actually in hell, can you imagine next the overwhelming horror that will roll over it? It, too, will be stunned with a mighty flood—not with a flood of glory, but with a flood of anger, of wrath, of divine justice! Oh, how the spirit is tormented now—tormented beyond thought! And then at last, when the wave recedes a moment, and there is a pause, what black despair shall then seize upon the spirit!

Have you ever seen men die without hope? I read but yesterday a case of a young woman who had procrastinated many times, and at last she was told by the physician that within nine hours he really believed she would be a corpse. Then, when death really became a matter of fact to her, she rose up in the bed upon which she had been laid by the sudden stroke

of God, and she prayed—prayed till she fell back fainting, and her lips were livid, and her cheek was pale, while she cried, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” Friends talked to her, consoled and comforted her, and bade her trust in Christ. But she said, “It is of no use for you to comfort me! No, it is too late! I made a fatal resolve some months ago that I would again enjoy the world, and that resolve has destroyed my soul.” And then she rose up in bed again, with eyes starting from their sockets, and prayed again till she was breathless, and groaned and cried, and fell down again in a faint, needing to be restored once more. And so she did, till with a ghastly look—an awful look of horror—as though she felt the anguish of another world, she expired.

Now, if such is the remorse of a spirit before it feels the wrath of God—if the first drops are sufficient thus to destroy all hope, and beat in pieces all our boastings—what will the eternal hail be—what will the everlasting sleet of divine wrath be when once it is poured out? Sodom and Gomorrah! Why all their fiery hail from heaven shall be nothing compared with the eternal fire that must fall upon the sinner! Do you think I love to speak on such a theme as this? My soul trembles while she thinks of it. No, I would sooner preach of other things by far—but it is necessary that men may be awakened. Oh, I implore you, men and women, you who know not God, and are still condemned because you believe not in Christ—I pray you think of these things! Oh, that I had a Baxter’s heart, that I could weep over sinners as he did; but my soul feels as true an anguish for your souls as ever Baxter felt! Oh, that you would be saved! My eyes ache; my brow is full of fire because I cannot preach as I wanted to preach to you! Oh, that God would take up the work, and send His truth right home. I know I shall soon die, and you, too. And I shall face each of you, and your eyes shall stare on me forever and ever, if you are lost through my

unfaithfulness. And shall it be—shall it be? Oh, that we had a hope that all of us might see the face of God and live! “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.”

Spirit of God, convict of sin and bring the heart to Christ, and may we all without exception see Your face in joy and glory, and praise You, world without end. Amen.

350 A BLOW AT SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS – JOB. 9:20

**A Sermon
Delivered on Sabbath Morning, December 16th, 1860,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At Exeter Hall, Strand**

**“If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me: if I
say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse.”— Job 9:20**

EVER SINCE man became a sinner he has been self-righteous. When he had righteousness of his own he never gloried of it, but ever since he has lost it, he has pretended to be the possessor of it! Those proud words which our father Adam uttered when he sought to screen himself from the guilt of his treason against his Maker, laying the blame apparently on Eve, but really upon God who gave him the woman, were virtually a claim to blamelessness. It was but a fig leaf he could find to cover his nakedness, but how proud was he of that fig-leaf excuse, and how tenaciously did he hold to it. As it was with our first parents, so is it with us—self-righteousness is born with us, and there is perhaps no sin which has so much vitality in it as the sin of righteous self. We can overcome lust itself, and anger, and the fierce passions of the will better than we can ever master the proud boastfulness which rises in our hearts, and tempts us to think ourselves rich and increased in goods while God knows we are naked, and poor and miserable! Tens of thousands of sermons have been preached against self-

righteousness, and yet, it is as necessary to turn the great guns of the law against its walls today as ever it was. Martin Luther said he scarcely ever preached a sermon without preaching against the righteousness of man, and yet, he said, “I find that I still cannot preach it down. Still men will boast in what they can do, and mistake the path to heaven to be a road paved by their own merits, and not a way besprinkled by the blood of the atonement of Jesus Christ.” My dear hearers, I cannot compliment you by imagining that all of you have been delivered from the great delusion of trusting in yourselves! The godly, those who are righteous through faith in Christ, still have to mourn that this infirmity clings to them; while as to the unconverted themselves, their besetting sin is to deny their guilt, to plead that they are as good as others, and to indulge still the vain and foolish hope that they shall enter into heaven from some doings, sufferings, or weeping of their own! I do not suppose there are any who are self-righteous in as bold a sense as the poor countryman I have heard of. His minister had tried to explain to him the way of salvation, but either his head was very dull, or else his soul was very hostile to the truth the minister would impart; for he so little understood what he had heard, that when the question was put, “Now then, what is the way by which you hope you can be saved before God?” the poor honest simpleton said, “Do you not think, sir, if I were to sleep one cold frosty night under a hawthorn bush, that would go a great way towards it?” conceiving that his *suffering* might, in some degree at least, assist him in getting into heaven! You would not state your opinion in so bold a manner; you would refine it, you would gild it, you would disguise it—but it would come to the same thing after all! You would still believe that some sufferings, repentings, or believing of your own, might possibly merit salvation. The Church of Rome often tells this so very plainly, that we cannot think it less than profanity! I

have been informed that there is in one of the Romish chapels in Cork, a monument bearing these words upon it, “I. H. S. Sacred to the memory of the benevolent Edward Molloy; a friend of humanity, the father of the poor; he employed the wealth of this world only to procure the riches of the next, and leaving a balance of merit in the book of life, he made heaven debtor to mercy. He died October 17th, 1818, aged 90.” I do not suppose that any of you will have such an epitaph on your tombstones, or ever dream of putting it as a matter of account with God, and striking a balance with Him—your sins being on one side, and your righteousness on the other— and hoping that a balance might remain! And yet, the very same idea, only not so honestly expressed—a little more guarded and a little more refined—the same idea only taught to speak after a gospel dialect, is inherent in us all, and only divine grace can thoroughly cast it out of us!

The sermon of this morning is intended to be another blow against our self-righteousness. If it will not die, at least let us spare no arrows against it; let us draw the bow, and if the shaft cannot penetrate its heart, it may at least stick in its flesh and help to worry it to its grave.

I. Endeavoring to keep close to my text, I shall start with this first point—that **THE PLEA OF SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS CONTRADICTS ITSELF**. “If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me.”

Come, friend, you who justify yourself by your own works, let me hear you speak. “I say that I have no need of a salvation by the blood and righteousness of another, for I believe that I have kept the commandments of God from my youth up, and I do not think that I am guilty in His sight. I hope that I may be able in my own right to claim a seat in paradise.” Now, sir, your plea and this declaration of yours is in itself a condemnation of you, because upon its very surface it is

apparent that you *are committing sin while you are pleading that you have no sin*; for the very plea itself is a piece of high and arrogant presumption! God has said it, let Jew and Gentile stop his mouth, and let the entire world stand guilty before God. We have it on Inspired authority, that “There is none righteous, no, not one.” “There is none good, save one that is God.” We are told by the mouth of a prophet sent from God, that, “All we, like wandering sheep, have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way.” And you, in saying that you are righteous, do commit the sin of calling God a liar! *You* have dared to impugn His veracity, you have slandered His justice. This boast of yours is, in itself, a sin so great, so heinous, that if you had only that one sin to account for, it would be sufficient to sink you to the lowest hell. The *boast*, I say, is in itself a sin! The moment that a man says, “I have no sin,” he commits a sin in the saying of it—the sin of contradicting his Maker, and making God a false accuser of His creatures.

Besides, do you not see, you vain and foolish creature, that you have been guilty of *pride* in the very language you have used? Who but a proud man would stand up and commend himself? Who but one who was proud as Lucifer, would in the face of God's declaration, declare himself to be just and holy? Did the best of men ever speak thus? Did they not, all of them, acknowledge that they were guilty? Did Job, of whom God said that he was a perfect and an upright man, claim perfection? Did he not say, “If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me”? Oh, proud wretch, how are you puffed up! How has Satan bewitched you! How has he made you lift up your horn on high and speak with a stiff neck! Take heed to yourself, for if you had never been guilty before, this pride of yours were quite sufficient to draw Jehovah's thunderbolts out of the quiver, and make Him smite you once and for all to your eternal destruction! But further, the plea of self-righteousness is self-

contradictory upon another ground, for all that a self-righteous man pleads for is *comparative* righteousness. “Why,” he says, “I am no worse than my neighbors—in fact, a great deal better! I do not drink, or swear; I do not commit fornication or adultery; I am no Sabbath breaker, I am no thief. The laws of my country do not accuse, much less condemn me; I am better than the most of men, and if I am not saved, God help those who are worse than I am! If I cannot enter the kingdom of heaven, who can?” Just so—but then, all that you claim is that you are righteous as compared with *others*. Do you not see that this is a very vain and fatal plea, because you do in fact, admit that you are not *perfectly* righteous—that there is *some* sin in you—only you claim there is not as much in you as in another! You admit that you are diseased, but then, the plague spot is not so apparent in you, as in your *fellow man*. You admit that you have robbed God, and have broken His laws, only you have not done it with so desperate an intent, nor with so many aggravations as others. Now this is virtually a plea of *guilty*, disguise it as you may! You admit that you have been guilty, and against you the sentence comes forth—“*The soul that sins, it shall die.*” Take heed to yourself that you find no shelter in this refuge of lies, for it shall certainly fail you when God shall come to judge the world with righteousness and the people with equity!

Suppose now for a moment that a command is issued to the beasts of the forest that they should become sheep. It is quite in vain for the bear to come forward, and plead that he was not so venomous a creature as the serpent. It would be equally absurd for the wolf to say that though stealthy and cunning, and gaunt and grim, yet he was not so great a grumbler, nor so ugly a creature as the bear. The lion might plead that he had not the craftiness of the fox. “It is true,” he says, “I wet my tongue in blood, but then, I have some virtues which may

commend me and which, in fact, have made me king of beasts.” What would this argument avail? The indictment is that these animals are not *sheep*—their plea against the indictment is that they are no less like sheep than other creatures, and that some of them have more gentleness and more docility than others of their kind. The plea would never stand! Or use another picture. If in the courts of justice, a thief, when called up, should argue, “Well, I am not so great a thief as some. There are to be found some living in Whitechapel or St. Giles who have been thieves longer than I have, and if there is one conviction in the book against me, there are some who have a dozen convictions against them.” No magistrate would acquit a man on such an excuse as that! It would be tantamount to his admission of a degree of guilt, though he might try to excuse himself because he had not reached a higher degree. It is so with you, sinner! You have sinned. Another man’s sins cannot excuse you; you must stand upon your own feet! At the Day of Judgment you must, yourself, make a personal appearance, and it will not be what another man has done that will condemn, or acquit you, but your own personal guilt. Take heed; take heed, sinner, for it will not avail you that there are others blacker with sin than yourself! If there is but a spot upon you, you are lost! If there is but *one* sin unwashed by Jesus’ blood—your portion must be with the tormentors—a holy God cannot look even upon the least degree of iniquity!

But further, the plea of the self-conceited man is that he has done his best, and can claim a *partial* righteousness. It is true, if you touch him in a tender place, he acknowledges that his boyhood and his youth were stained with sin. He tells you that in his early days he was a “fast lad,” that he did many things which he is sorry for now. “But then,” he says, “these are only like spots in the sun; these are only like a small headland of waste ground in acres of fruitful soil; I am still good, I am still

righteous, because my virtues exceed my vices, and my good deeds quite cover up all the mistakes that I have committed!” Well, sir, do you not see that the only righteousness you claim is a *partial* righteousness, and in that very claim, you do in fact, make an admission that you are not perfect? You admit you have committed some sins. Now I am not responsible for what I am about to state, nor am I to be blamed for harshness in it, because I state neither more nor less than the very truth of God—it is of no saving grace to you that you have *not* committed 10,000 sins—for if you have committed *one* you are a lost soul! The law is to be kept intact and entire, and the least crack or flaw, or breakage, spoils it. The robe of righteousness, in which you must stand at last, must be without spot or blemish; if there is but one microscopic stain upon it, which is supposing what is never true, yet even then, the gates of heaven never can admit you. A *perfect* righteousness you must have, or else you shall never be admitted to that wedding feast! You may say, “I have kept such a commandment and have never broken it,” but if you have broken another, you are guilty of the whole, because the whole law is like one rich and costly vase—it is one in design and fashion—though you break not the foot, and stain not the margin, yet, if there is any flaw or damage, the whole vessel is marred. And so if you have sinned in *any* point, at *any* time, and in *any* degree, you have broken the whole law; you stand guilty of it before God—nor can you be saved by the works of the law, or by a church, do what you may.

“It is a hard sentence,” says one, “and who can bear it!” Indeed, who *can* bear it? Who *can* bear to stand at the foot of Sinai and hear its thunders roar? “If so much as a beast touches the mountain, it must be stoned or thrust through with a dart.” Who can stand when the lightnings flash and God descends upon Mount Paran, and the hills melt like wax beneath His feet? “By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh living be justified.”

“Cursed is everyone who continues not in all things that are written in the law to do them.” Cursed is the man who sins but once, yes, *hopelessly cursed* so far as the law is concerned! Oh, sinner, I cannot help turning aside from the subject for a moment to remind you that there is a way of salvation, and a way by which the law’s demands can be fully satisfied! *Christ* bore all the punishment of all believers, so that they cannot be punished. Christ kept the law of God for believers, and He is willing to cast about any and every penitent sinner that perfect robe of righteousness which He Himself has worked out. But *you* cannot keep the law, and if you bring up your self-righteousness, the law condemns both it and you! Out of your own mouth it condemns you, inasmuch as you have not done all things, and have not kept all the law. A great rock lies in your path to heaven; a mountain insurmountable; a gulf impassable; and by that road no man shall ever enter into eternal life.

The plea of self-righteousness, then, is in itself self-contradicting, and has only to be fairly stated to an honest man for him to see that it will not hold water for a single moment! What need of labored argument to disprove a self-evident lie? Why should we tarry longer? Who but a very fool would maintain a notion which flies in its own face, and witnesses against itself?

II. But now, I pass to the second point, THE MAN WHO USES THIS PLEA CONDEMNS THE PLEA HIMSELF.

Not only does the plea cut its own throat, but the man himself is aware when he uses it, that it is an evil and false, and vain refuge. Now, this is a matter of conscience, and therefore, I must deal plainly with you, and if I speak not what you have felt, then you can say I am mistaken. But, if I speak what you must confess to be true, let it be as the very voice of God to you! Men *know* that they are guilty! The conscience of the proudest man, when it is allowed to speak, tells him that he

deserves the wrath of God. He may brag in public, but the very loudness of his bragging proves that he has an uneasy conscience, and therefore, he makes a mighty din in order to drown its voice. Whenever I hear an infidel saying hard things of Christ, it reminds me of the men of Moloch, who beat the drums that they might not hear the screams of their own children. These loud blasphemies, these braggart boastings are only a noisy way of drowning the shrieks of conscience! Do not believe that these men are honest. I think all controversy with them is time thrown away. I would never argue with a thief about the principles of honesty, or with a known adulterer concerning the duty of chastity. Devils are not to be reasoned with—but to be cast out! Parleying with hell serves no one's turn except the devil's. Did Paul argue with Elymas? Or Peter with Simon Magus? I would not cross swords with a man who says there is no God—*he knows there is a God!* When a man laughs at Holy Scripture, you need not argue with him—he is either a fool or a knave—perhaps both. However villainous he may be, his conscience has some light; he knows that what he speaks is untrue. I cannot believe that conscience is so dead in any man as to let him believe that he is speaking the truth when he denies the Godhead; and much more I am certain that conscience never did give assent to the utterance of the braggart who says he deserves eternal life, or has no sin of which to repent, or which by repentance may be washed away without the blood of Christ. He knows within himself that he speaks that which is false! When Professor Webster was shut up in prison for murder, he complained to the prison authorities that he had been insulted by his fellow prisoners, for he said that through the walls of the prison he could hear them always crying out to him, “You bloody man! You bloody man!” As it was not consistent with law, that one prisoner should insult another, the strictest inquiry was made, and it was

found that no prisoner had ever said such a word, or that if he had said it, Webster could not have heard it. It was his conscience! It was not a word coming through the walls of the prison, but an echo reverberating from the wall of his bad heart, as conscience shouted, “You bloody man! You bloody man!” There is in all your hearts a witness who will not cease his testimony. It cries, “You sinful man! You sinful man!” You have only to listen to it, and you will soon find that every pretense of being saved by your good works must crumble to the ground! Oh, hear it now and listen to it for a moment! I am sure *my* conscience says, “You sinful man! You sinful man!” And I think yours must say the same unless you are given up of God, and left to a seared conscience to perish in your sins.

When men get alone—if in their loneliness the thought of death forces itself upon them—they boast no more of goodness. It is not easy for a man to lie on his bed seeing the naked face of death, not at a distance, but feeling that his breath is breathing upon the skeleton, and that he must soon pass through the iron gates of death. It is not easy for a man to plead his self-righteousness then! The bony fingers thrust themselves like daggers into his proud flesh. “Ah,” says grim Death, in tones which cannot be heard by mortal ear, but which are listened to by the mortal heart—“where now are all your glories?” He looks upon the man and the wreath of laurel that was upon his brow fades and falls to the earth like blasted flowers; he touches his breast, and the star of honor which he wore molds, and is quenched into darkness. He looks at him yet again—that breast-plate of self-righteousness which glittered upon him like golden mail suddenly dissolves into dust, like the apples of Sodom before the touch of the gatherer! The man finds himself, to his own surprise, naked and poor, and miserable when most he needed to be rich, when most he required to be happy, and to be blessed. Yes, sinner, even while

this sermon is being uttered, you may seek to refute it to yourself and say, “Well, I believe I am as good as others, and that this fuss about a new birth, imputed righteousness, and being washed in blood is all unnecessary.” But in the loneliness of your silent chamber, especially when death shall be your dread and grim companion, you shall not need me to state this—you shall see it clearly enough yourselves, see it with eyes of horror—and feel it with a heart of dismay and despair, and perish because you have despised the righteousness of Christ!

How abundantly true, however, will this be at the Day of Judgment. I think I see that day of fire, that day of wrath. You are gathered as a great multitude before the eternal throne of God. Those who are robed in Christ’s fine linen, which is the righteousness of the saints, are caught up to the right hand. And now the trumpet sounds—if there are any who have kept the law of God—if there are faultless ones; if there are any who have *never* sinned, let them stand forth and claim the promised reward! But, if not, let the pit of hell engulf the sinner, let the fiery thunderbolt be launched upon the impenitent offenders! Now, stand forth, sir, and clear yourself! Come forth, my friend, and claim the reward, because of the church you endowed, or the row of almshouses that you erected! What? What? Does your tongue lie dumb in your mouth? Come forward, come forward—you who said you had been a good citizen, had fed the hungry, and clothed the naked—come forward and claim the reward! What? What? Is your face turned to whiteness? Is there an ashy paleness on your cheeks? Come forward, you multitudes who rejected Christ, and despised His blood! Come now and say, “All the commandments have I kept from my youth up.” What? Are you seized with horror? Has the better light of judgment driven out the darkness of your self-righteousness? Oh, I see you, I see you, you are not boasting now! But you, the best of you, are crying, “You rocks, hide me!

You mountains, open your stony bowels, and let me hide myself from the face of Him who sits upon the throne!" Why, why such a coward? Come; face it out before your Maker! Come up, infidel! Now, tell God there is no God! Come, while hell is flaming in your nostrils; come and say there is no hell; or tell the Almighty that you never could bear to hear a hell-fire sermon preached! Come now, and accuse the minister of cruelty, or say that we love to talk on these terrible themes. Let me not mock you in your misery; but let me picture to you how devils shall mock you. "Aha," say they "where is your courage now? Are your ribs of iron, and your bones of brass? Will you dare the Almighty now, and dash yourselves upon the points of His buckler, or run upon His glittering spear?" See them, see them as they sink! The gulf has swallowed them up! The earth has closed again, and they are gone; a solemn silence falls upon the ears. But hark below, if you could descend with them, you would hear their doleful groans, and hollow moans, as they now feel that the omnipotent God was right and just, and wise and tender, when He bade them forsake their righteousness and flee to Christ and lay hold on Him who can save to the uttermost them who come unto God by Him!

III. THE PLEA IS ITSELF EVIDENCE AGAINST THE PLEADER.

There is an unregenerated man here, who says, "Am I blind also?" I answer in the words of Jesus, "But now you say, we see, therefore, your sin remains." You have proved by your plea, in the first place, that you have never been enlightened of the Holy Spirit, but that you remain in a state of ignorance. A deaf man may declare that there is no such thing as music. A man who has never seen the stars is very likely to say that there are no stars. But what does he prove? Does he prove that there are no stars? He only proves his own folly, and his own ignorance. That man who can say half a word about his own righteousness

has never been enlightened of God the Holy Spirit; for one of the first signs of a renewed heart is that it abhors itself in dust and ashes. If you today feel yourself to be guilty, and lost and ruined, there is the richest hope for you in the gospel. But if you say, “*I am good*; I have merits,” the law condemns you, and the gospel cannot comfort you—you are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity, and you are ignorant that all the while you are talking thus, the wrath of God abides on you! A man *may* be a true Christian and *may* fall into sin, but a man cannot be a true Christian, and boast in his self-righteousness. A man may be saved, though infirmity may bespatter him with much mire, but *he* cannot be saved who does not know that he has been in the filth, and is not willing to confess that he is guilty before God. There are, in one sense, no conditions of salvation on our part, for whatever may be conditions, God gives. But thus I know, there never was a man yet, who was in a state of grace who did not know himself, in himself, to be in a state of ruin, a state of depravity, and condemnation. If you do not know this, then I say your plea of self-righteousness condemns you for ignorance!

But then again, inasmuch as you say that you are not guilty, this proves that you are impenitent. Now, the impenitent can never come where God is. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” “But if we say that we have no sins, we make God a liar, and the truth is not in us.” God will pardon all men who confess their iniquity; if we weep and lament, and take with us words, and say, “We have grievously sinned, forgive us—we have greatly erred, have mercy upon us, through Jesus Christ,” God will not refuse the cry. But if we, out of our impenitent and hard hearts, put ourselves upon God’s Justice, God will give us justice, but not *mercy*. And that justice shall be the meting out to us of the full vials of His indignation, and of His wrath forever and ever! He

who is self-righteous, is impenitent, and therefore he is not, and cannot be saved!

Further than this, the self-righteous man, the moment that he says he has done anything which can recommend him to God, proves that he is not a believer. Now, salvation is for believers and for believers only. “He who believes, and is baptized, shall be saved. He who believes not, shall be damned.” Sir, you will be damned with all your self-righteousness and your self-righteousness shall be like Dejanira’s tunic which she gave to Hercules, and which he put upon him and, as the old fable has it, it became a robe of fire to him. He tried to drag it away, but he pulled away pieces of his living, quivering flesh each moment, and perished miserably! Such shall your self-righteousness be to you. It seems a pleasant draught and intoxicates for the moment; but it is deadly and damnable as the venom of asps, and as the wine of Gomorrah. O soul! Would that you would flee, above all things, from self-righteousness; for a self-righteous man does not and cannot trust Christ and therefore he cannot see the face of God! None but the naked man will ever go to Christ for clothing; none but the hungry man will ever take Christ to be his food; none but thirsty souls will ever come to this well of Bethlehem to drink. The thirsty are welcome; but those who think they are good, are welcome neither to Sinai nor to Calvary. They have no hope of heaven, no peace in this world, nor in that which is to come.

Ah, soul, I know not who you are; but if you have any righteousness of your own, you are a graceless soul. If you have given all your goods to feed the poor; if you have built many and many a sanctuary; if you have gone about with self-denial among the houses of poverty to visit the sons and daughters of affliction; if you have fasted thrice in the week; if your prayers have been so long that your throat has become hoarse through your crying; if your tears have been so many that your eyes have

become blinded through your weeping; if your readings of Scripture have been so long that the midnight oil has been consumed in abundance—if, I say, your heart has been so tender towards the poor, and the sick and the needy, that you would have been willing to suffer with them—to bear all their loathsome diseases—no, if adding all this, you could give your body to be burned, yet if you trusted in any one of these things, your damnation would be as sure as though you were a thief or a drunkard! Understand me, I mean what I say! I want you not to think I speak unguardedly. Christ said of the Pharisees of old, the very thing that I have said of you. They were good and excellent in their way, but, He said, the publicans and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you, because they would go the wrong way, while the poor publicans and harlots were led to go the right way! The Pharisee who went about to make a righteousness of his own, did not submit to the righteousness of Christ! The publican and the harlot, knowing that they had nothing whereof to glory, came to Christ and took Him as He was, and gave their souls up to be saved by His grace. Oh, that we may do the same; for until we get rid of self-righteousness, we are in a state of condemnation and dying—the sentence must be executed upon us forever and ever!

IV. I close now upon the last point, namely, that this plea, if we retain it, not only accuses the pleader now, but **IT WILL RUIN THE PLEADER FOREVER.**

Let me show you two suicides. There is a man who has sharpened a dagger, and seeking out his opportunity, he stabs himself in the heart. There he falls. Who shall blame any man for his death? He slew himself; his blood is on his own head.

Here is another—he is very sick and ill. He can scarcely crawl about the streets. A physician waits upon him; he tells him, “Sir, your disease is deadly. You must die. But I know a remedy which will certainly heal you. Here it is; I freely give it

to you! All I ask of you is that you will freely take it.” “Sir,” says the man, “you insult me! I am as well as ever I was in my life. I am not sick.” “But,” says the doctor, “There are certain signs which I mark in your countenance which prove to me that you have a deadly disease about you, and I warn you.” The man thinks a moment—remembers that there have been certain signs in him of this very sickness. A monitor within tells him that it is so. He obstinately replies to the physician a second time—“Sir, if I want your medicine, I will send for it; and if I need it, I will pay for it.” He knows all the while there is not a farthing in his pocket, and that he cannot get credit anywhere. And there stands, the life-giving cup before him which the physician at great expense has obtained, and which he would freely give to him, and bid him freely take. “No,” says the man, “I will not take it. I may be somewhat sick, but I am not worse than my neighbors. I am not more ill than other people, and I shall not take it.” One day you go to his bed, and you find he has slept his last sleep, and there he lies stone dead. Who slew this man? Who killed him? His blood is on his own head! He is as base a suicide as the other!

Now, I will show you two more suicides. There is a man here who says—“Well let what will happen in the next world, I will have my fill in this! Tell me where there are pleasures to be had, and I will have them; leave the things of God to old fools, and such like—I shall have the things of the present, and the joys and delights of time.” He drains the cup of drunkenness, frequents the haunt of folly, and if he knows where there is any vice pursued, he rushes after it. Like Byron, he is a very thunderbolt, launched from the hand of an arch-fiend! He flashes through the whole firmament of sin, and blazes himself out, until decayed in body and soul, he dies. He is a suicide! He defied God; he went against the laws of nature and of grace,

despised warnings, declared he would be damned, and he has got what he richly deserved.

Here is another. He says, “I despise these vices. I am the most upright, honest, and commendable of men. I feel that I do not need salvation, and if I did need it, I could get it myself. I can do anything you tell me to do. I feel I have mental force and manly dignity enough remaining in me to accomplish it! I tell you, sir, you insult me when you bid me trust in Christ. Well,” he says, “I consider there is such dignity in manhood, and so much virtue in me, that I need not a new heart nor will I succumb and bend my spirit to the gospel of Christ on free grace terms.” Very well sir, when in hell you lift up your eyes and you *will do so* as surely as the most profligate and profane, your blood will be upon your own head; and you will be as truly a suicide as he who wantonly and wickedly dashed himself against the laws of God and man, and brought himself to a sudden and hasty end by his iniquity and crimes.

“Well,” says one, “this is a sermon well adapted to self-righteous persons, but I am not one.” Then what are you, sir? Are you a believer in Christ? “I cannot say I am, sir.” Why are you not, then? “Well, I would be, but I am afraid I may not believe in Christ.” You are self-righteous, sir. God *commands* you to believe in Christ, and you say you are not fit! Now what does this mean, but that you are waiting to make yourself fit, and this, after all, is the spirit of self-righteousness. You are so proud that you will not take Christ unless you think you can bring something to Him—that is it. “Ah, no,” says one poor broken-hearted soul, “I do not think that is fair with me, for I do feel as if I would give anything if I might hope to be saved. But oh, I am such a wretch! I am such a wretch! I cannot believe.” Now, that after all is self-righteousness. Christ bids you trust Him; you say, “No, I will not trust you, Christ, because I am such-a-one, and such-a-one.” So, then, you need

to make yourself somebody, and then Jesus Christ is to do the rest. It is the same spirit of self-righteousness, only in another garb. “Ah,” says one, “but if I did but feel my need enough, as you just now said, sir, then I think I would trust Christ.” Self-righteousness again! You want your *sense of need* to save you. “Oh, but, sir, I cannot believe in Christ as I would.” Self-righteousness again! Let me just utter a solemn sentence which you may masticate at your leisure. If you trust to your faith, and to your repentance, you will be as much lost as if you trusted to your good works or trusted to your sins! The ground of your salvation is not *faith*, but *Christ*! It is not *repentance*, but *Christ*! If I trust *my trust* of Christ, I am lost! My business is to trust Christ; to rest on Him; to depend not on what the Spirit has done in me, but what *Christ* did *for* me when He did hang upon the cross. Now, be it known unto you that when Christ died, He took the sins of all His people upon His head, and then and there they all ceased to be! At the moment when Christ died, the sins of all His redeemed were blotted out. He did then suffer all they ought to have suffered; He paid all their debts; and their sins were actually and positively lifted that day from *their* shoulders to *His* shoulders, for “The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” And now, if you believe in Jesus, there is not a sin remaining upon you, for your sin was laid on Christ! Christ was punished for your sins before they were committed, and as Kent says—

“Here’s pardon for transgressions past,
It matters not how black their caste;
And oh, my soul with wonder view,
For sins to come, here’s pardon too.”

Blessed privilege of the believer! But if you live and die *unbelievers*, know this, that all your sins lie on your own

shoulders! Christ did never make any atonement for you; you were never bought with blood; you never had an interest in His sacrifice. You live and die in yourselves; lost in yourselves; ruined in yourselves, utterly destroyed! But believing—the moment you believe—you may know that you were chosen of God from before the foundation of the world! Believing, you may know that the righteousness of Christ is all yours; that all He did, He did for you; that all He suffered, He suffered for you. You do in fact, in the moment you believe, stand where Christ stood as God's accepted Son! And Christ stands where you stood as the sinner, and suffers as if He had been the sinner, and dies as if He had been guilty—dies in your place!

Oh, Spirit of God, give faith this morning! Win us all from self! Knit us all to Christ—may we be saved now by His free grace, and be saved in eternity. Amen.

351 PLENTIOUS REDEMPTION – PS. 130:7

A Sermon
Delivered on Sabbath Evening, December 16th, 1860,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At Exeter Hall, Strand

“With Him is plenteous redemption.” – Psalms 130:7

REDEMPTION is a word which has gladdened many ears when there was no heavenly sound in its blessed chime. Apart from any theological use of it, the word is a very sweet one, and has been melodious to many hearts. In those days when piracy was carried on continually along the coast of Africa, when our fellow Christian subjects were caught by sea robbers, and carried away captive, you can well understand how the burdened soul of the manacled slave, chained to the oar of his galley, was gladdened by the hope that possibly there would be *redemption*. His cruel master, who had forced him into his possession, would not willingly emancipate him; but a rumor came that in some distant nation they had raised a sum of money to purchase the freedom of slaves—that some wealthy merchant had dedicated of his substance to buy back his fellow countrymen; that the king, himself, upon his throne had promised to give a liberal redemption that the captives among the Moors might return to their homes. Truly I can suppose the hours would run happily along, and the dreariness of their toil would be relieved when once that word, “*redemption*,” had sounded in their ears! So with our fellow subjects, and our fellow men who once were slaves in our West India settlements,

we can well conceive that to their lips the word, *redemption*, must have been a very pleasing song. It must have been well nigh as sweet to them as the marriage peals to a youthful bridegroom, when they knew that the noble British nation would count down the twenty millions of their redemption money—that on a certain morning their fetters would be snapped asunder, so that they would no more go out to the plantations to sweat in the sun, driven by the whip—but they could call themselves their own, and none should be their masters to possess their flesh, and have property of their souls. You can conceive when the sun of that happy morn arose—when emancipation was proclaimed from sea to sea, and the whole land was at liberty—how joyful must their new-found freedom have appeared! O there are many sonnets in that one word, “*redemption!*”

Now, you who have sold for nothing your glorious heritage; you who have been carried bond slaves into Satan’s dominion; you who have worn the fetters of guilt, and groaned under them; you who have smarted beneath the lash of the law of God; what the news of redemption has been to slaves and captives, that will it be to you tonight! It will cheer your souls, gladden your spirits, and more especially so when that rich adjective is coupled with it—“*plenteous* redemption.”

This evening, I shall consider the subject of *redemption*, and then notice the *adjective appended to the word*—“*plenteous* redemption.”

I. First, then, we shall consider the subject of **REDEMPTION.**

I shall commence in this way, by asking, *What has Christ redeemed?* And in order to let you know what my views are upon this subject, I would announce at once what I conceive to be an authoritative doctrine—consistent with common sense and declared to us by Scripture—namely, that whatever Christ has redeemed—Christ will most assuredly have! I start with that as

an axiom—that whatever Christ has redeemed—Christ will have. I hold it to be repugnant to reason and much more to revelation, that Christ should die to purchase what He never shall obtain; and I hold it to be little less than blasphemy to assert that the intention of our Savior's death can ever be frustrated! Whatever was Christ's intention when He died—we lay it down as a very groundwork truth of God which ought to be granted to us by every reasonable man—that Christ will most certainly gain. I cannot see how it can be that the intention of God in anything can be frustrated. We have always thought God to be so superior to creatures, that when He has once intended a thing, it must most assuredly be accomplished; and if I have that granted to me, I cannot for a moment allow you to imagine that Christ should shed His blood in vain! Nor that He should die with an intention of doing something, and yet should not perform it—that He should die with a full intention in His heart, and with a promise on the part of God that a certain thing should be given to Him as a reward of His sufferings—and yet should fail to obtain it! I start with that; and I think that everyone who will weigh the matter and truly consider it, must see it to be so—that Christ's intention in His death must be fulfilled, and that the design of God, whatever that may be, must certainly be carried out! Well then, I believe that the efficacy of Christ's blood knows no other limit than the purpose of God. I believe that the efficacy of Christ's atonement is just as great as God meant it should be, and that what Christ redeemed is precisely what He *meant to redeem* and exactly what the Father had decreed He should redeem! Therefore I cannot for one moment give any credence whatever to that doctrine which tells us that *all men are redeemed!* Some may hold it, as I know they do, and hold it very strongly and even urge it as being a fundamental part of the doctrine of revelation. They are welcome to it; this is a land of liberty. Let

them hold their views, but I must tell them solemnly my persuasion that they cannot hold such doctrine if they do but well consider the matter; for if they once believe in universal redemption, they are driven to the blasphemous inference that God's intention is frustrated, and that Christ has not received what He died to procure! If, therefore, they can believe that, I will give them credit for being able to believe anything; and I shall not despair of seeing them landed at the Salt Lake, or in any other region where enthusiasm and credulity can flourish without the checks of ridicule or reason!

Starting then, with this assumption, I beg now to tell you what I believe according to sound doctrine and Scripture. Christ has *really* redeemed. His redemption is a very concise redemption. He has redeemed many things; He has redeemed the souls of His people; He has redeemed the bodies of His people; He has redeemed the original inheritance which man lost in Adam; He has redeemed, in the last place, the world, considered in a certain sense—in the sense in which He will have the world at last.

Christ has redeemed *the souls of all His people who shall ultimately be saved*. To state it after the Calvinistic form, Christ has redeemed His *elect*. But since you do not know His elect until they are revealed, we will alter that and say, Christ has redeemed all *penitent souls*; Christ has redeemed all believing souls; *and* Christ has redeemed the souls of all those who die in infancy—seeing it is to be received that all those who die in infancy are written in the Lamb's book of life, and are graciously privileged by God to go at once to heaven—instead of toiling through this weary world. The souls of all those who were written before all worlds in the Lamb's book of life, who in process of time are humbled before God, who in due course are led to lay hold of Christ Jesus as the only refuge of their souls, who hold on their way and ultimately attain to heaven—

these, I believe were redeemed—and I most firmly and solemnly believe the souls of no other men were in that sense subjects of Christ's redemption. I do not hold the doctrine that Judas was redeemed. I could not conceive my Savior bearing the punishment for Judas, or if so, how could Judas be punished again? I could not conceive it possible that God should exact first at Christ's hands, the penalty of his sin, and then at the sinner's hands again. I cannot conceive for a moment that Christ should have shed His blood in vain; and though I have read in the books of certain divines that Christ's blood is fuel for the flames of hell, I have shuddered at the thought, and have cast it from me as being a dreadful assertion, perhaps worthy of those who made it, but utterly unsupported by the Word of God! The souls of God's people, whoever they may be—and they are a multitude that no man can number—and I fondly hope they are all of you—are effectually redeemed!

1. Briefly, they are redeemed in three ways. They are redeemed from the guilt of sin, from the punishment of sin, and from the power of sin. The souls of Christ's people have guilt on account of sin until they are redeemed. But when once redemption is applied to my soul, my sins are, every one of them, from that moment forever blotted out—

“The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in his crucified Lord,
His pardon at once he receives,
Salvation in full through His blood.”

The guilt of our sin is taken away by the redemption of Christ. Whatever sin you may have committed, the moment you believe in Christ, not only will you never be punished for that sin, but the very guilt of that sin is taken from you. You cease to be in God's sight any longer a guilty person! You are

reckoned by God as a justified believer to have the righteousness of Christ about you; and therefore, you can say—to recall a verse which we often repeat—

“Now freed from sin I walk at large,
My Savior’s blood’s my full discharge!
At His dear feet my soul I lay,
A sinner saved and homage pay.”

Every sin, every particle of guilt, every atom of transgression is, by the redemption of Christ, effectually taken away from the entire Lord’s believing family!

And mark, next—not only the guilt, but the *punishment* of sin is taken away! In fact, when we cease to be guilty, we cease to be the objects of punishment altogether! Take away the guilt—the punishment is gone; but to make it more effectual, it is as it were written over again that condemnation is taken away, as well as the sin for which we might be condemned. “There is, therefore, now, no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.” None of those who were redeemed by Christ can ever be damned; they can never be punished on account of sin, for Christ has suffered their punishment in their place, and therefore, they cannot—unless God is unjust—be sued a second time for debts already paid. If Christ, their ransom, died, they *cannot* die; if He, their surety, paid their debt, then unto God’s justice they no longer owe anything, for Christ has paid it all! If He has shed His blood; if He has yielded up the ghost; if He has “died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God,” how, then, would God be just, and yet the punisher of those whom He has *already punished* once in the person of Jesus Christ their Savior? No, beloved, through the *plenteous* redemption of Christ, we are delivered from all punishment on account of sin, and from all guilt which we had incurred thereby.

Moreover the believing family of Christ—or rather, all for whom He died—are most effectually delivered from the *power* of sin. Oh, there are some who suck in the two truths of God I have been mentioning, as if they were honey—but they cannot endure this other point—Christ delivers us from the *power* of sin! Mark you this, then—we affirm it very strongly—no man can ever be redeemed from the *guilt* of sin or from the *punishment* of sin, unless he is at the same time delivered from the *power* of sin! Unless he is made by God to hate his own sin; unless he is enabled to cast it to the ground; unless he is made to abhor every evil way, and to cleave unto God with full purpose of heart, walking before Him in the land of the living, in the strength of the Holy Spirit—such a man has no right to believe himself redeemed! If you are still under the dominion of your lusts, O wicked sinner, you have no right to think yourself a purchased heir of heaven! If you can be drunk, if you can swear, if you can curse God, if you can lie, if you can profane the Sabbath, if you can hate His people, if you can despise His Word, then, you have no right whatever, any more than Satan in hell, to boast that you are redeemed; for all the Lord's redeemed are in due time brought out of the house of bondage, out of the land of Egypt, and they are taught the evil of sin, the horrible penalty of it, and the desperate character of it in the sight of God. Are you delivered from the power of sin, my hearer? Have you mortified it? Are you dead unto it? Is it dead unto you? Is it crucified unto you and you unto it? Do you hate it as you would a viper? Do you tread on it as you would tread upon a serpent? If you do, albeit there are sins of frailty and infirmity, yet if you hate the sin of your heart, if you have an unutterable enmity to it, take courage and comfort! The Lord has redeemed you from the guilt and penalty, and also from the *power* of sin! That is the first point of Christ's redemption. And hear me distinctly again, lest any should

mistake me—I always like to preach so that there can be no mistake about it. I do not want to so preach that you will say in the judgment of charity, “He could not have meant what he said.” Now, I mean solemnly again to say what I have said—that I believe that none others were redeemed than those who are or shall be redeemed from the *guilt*, the *punishment*, and the *power* of sin! I say again—it is abhorrent to my reason, much less to my views of Scripture—to conceive that the damned ever were redeemed, and that the lost in hell were ever washed in the Savior’s blood, or that His blood was ever shed with an intention of saving them!

2. Now, let us think of the second thing Christ has redeemed. Christ has redeemed the *bodies of all His children*. In that day, when Christ redeemed our souls, He redeemed the tabernacles in which our souls dwell. At the same moment when the spirit was redeemed by blood, Christ, who gave His human soul and His human body to death, purchased the *body* as well as the soul of every believer. You ask, then, in what way His redemption operates upon the body of the believer? I answer, first, it ensures it a resurrection. Those for whom Christ died, are ensured by His death, a glorious resurrection. “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ, shall all be made alive.” All men are by virtue of the death of Christ quickened to a resurrection—but even here, there is a special property of the *elect*—seeing that they are quickened to a blessed resurrection, while others are quickened only to a cursed resurrection; a resurrection of woe, a resurrection of unutterable anguish. O Christian, your body is redeemed—

“What though your inbred sins require
Your flesh to see the dust,
Yet, as the Lord your Savior rose,
So all His followers must.”

What? Though in a little time I shall slumber in the tomb, though worms devour this body, I know that my Redeemer lives, and because He lives, I *know* that in my flesh I shall see God! These eyes which soon shall be glazed in death shall not be always closed in darkness—death shall be made to give back his prey; he shall restore all that he has taken. Lo, I see him there! He has the bodies of the just locked up in his dungeons; they are wrapped up in their grave clothes and he thinks they are secure—he has sealed their tombs and marked them for his own. O death! Foolish death! Your caskets shall be rifled! Your storehouses shall be broken open! Lo, the morning is come! Christ has descended from on high. I hear the trumpet, “Awake! Awake!” And lo, from their tombs, the righteous start—while Death sits in confusion howling in vain—to find his empire all bereft of its subjects—to find all his dungeons rifled of their prey. “Precious shall their blood be in His sight.” Precious shall be their bones! Their very dust is blessed, and Christ shall raise them with Himself. Think of that, you who have lost friends—you weeping children of sorrow—your redeemed friends shall live again! The very hands that grasped yours with a death clutch shall grasp them in paradise! Those very eyes that wept themselves away in tears, shall, with eye-strings that never shall be broken, wake up in the noonday of happiness! That very frame which you did sorrowfully convey with dread attire of a funeral to bury in its tomb—yes, that same body, made like the image of Jesus Christ, spiritualized and changed, but nevertheless, the same body, shall rise again! And you, if you are redeemed, shall see it—for Christ has purchased it, and Christ shall not die in vain! Death will not have one bone of the righteous—no, not a particle of their dust—no, not a hair of their heads! It shall all come back. Christ has purchased all our body, and the whole body shall be completed and united

forever in heaven with the glorified soul! The bodies of the righteous are redeemed and redeemed for eternal happiness.

3. In the next place, all the *possessions of the righteous* which were lost in Adam are redeemed. Adam! Where are you? I have a controversy with you, man, for I have lost much by you. Come here, Adam! You see what you are now; tell me what you once were. Then, I shall know what I have lost by you, and then, I shall be able to thank my Master that all you did lose, He has freely bought back to all believers. What did you lose? “Alas!” cries Adam, “I once had a crown; I was king of the entire world! The beasts crouched at my feet, and did me reverence; God made me that I might have supreme command over the cattle upon the hills, and over all fowls of the air, but I lost my crown. I once had a miter,” said Adam, “for I was a priest to God, and oftentimes in the morning did I climb the hills and sing sweet prayers of praise to Him who made me. My censer of praise has often smoked with incense, and my voice has been sweet with praise. Oft have I bid misty exhalations. Sun and moon, and stars sing His praise. Daily have I bid the herds upon the hills low out His glories, and the lions roar His honors. Nightly have I told the stars to shine out, and the little flowers to blossom forth. But ah, I lost my miter and I, who was once a priest to God, ceased any longer to be His holy servant.” Ah, Adam, you have lost me much. But yonder I see my Savior. He takes His crown off His head, that He may put a crown on *my* head! And He puts a miter on His head, to be a priest, that He may put a miter on *my* head, too—and on the head of all His people—for, as we have just been singing—

“You have redeemed our souls with blood,
Have set the prisoners free!
Have made us kings and priests to God,
And we shall reign with Thee.”

Just what Adam lost—the kingship and the priesthood of Christ—is won for all His believing people. And what else did you lose, Adam? “Why, I lost paradise.” Hush, man! Say nothing upon that, for Christ has bought me a paradise worth ten thousand such Edens as yours! So we can well forgive you that. And what else did you lose? “Why, I lost the image of my Maker.” Ah, hush, Adam! In Jesus Christ, we have something more than that, for we have the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, and surely that is even better than the image of the Maker—for it is the very dress and robe that the Maker wore! So, Adam, all that you have lost, I have again. Christ has redeemed all that we sold for nothing. I who have sold for nothing a divine heritage, shall have it back unbought—the gift of love, says Christ, even Mine. Oh, hear it, then! The trumpet of Jubilee is blown! Christ has redeemed the lost possessions of His people!

4. And now, I come to the last thing that Christ has redeemed, though not the last point of the discourse. Christ has redeemed the *world*. “Well, now,” says one, “that is strange, sir. You are going to flatly contradict yourself.” Stop a moment! Understand what I mean by *the world*, if you please! We do not mean every man in it. We never pretended such a thing! But I will tell you how Christ has redeemed the world. When Adam fell, God cursed the world with barrenness. “Thorns also and briars shall it bring forth unto you, and in the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread.” God cursed the earth! When Christ came into the world, they twisted a crown made of the cursed thorns, and they put that on His head and made Him king of the curse! And in that day He purchased the redemption of the *world* from its curse. And it is my very belief, and I think it is warranted by Scripture, that when Christ shall come a second time, this world will become everywhere as fertile as the garden of paradise used to be. I believe that Sahara, the literal desert,

shall one day blossom like Sharon, and rejoice like the Garden of the Lord. I do not conceive that this poor world is to be a forlorn planetary wanderer forever; I believe that she is yet to be clothed with vegetation, such as she once wore. We have evidences in the beds of coal underneath the earth that this world was once much more fertile than it is now. Gigantic trees once spread their mighty arms, and I had almost said one arm of a tree in that day would have built half a forest for us now! Then, mighty creatures, far different from ours, stalked through the earth; and I believe firmly that a luxuriant vegetation, such as this world once knew, shall be restored to us, and that we shall see again a garden such as we have not known—no more cursed with blight and mildew—with no more blast and withering we shall see a land like heaven itself—

“Where everlasting spring abides,
And never withering flowers.”

When Christ comes, He shall do even this.

In the day of the fall too, it is currently believed that animals for the first time received their ferocious temperament and began to prey on each other—of this we are not sure. But if I read Scripture rightly, I find that the lion shall lie down with the kid, and that the leopard shall eat straw like the ox, and that the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den. I do believe that in millennial years that are coming, and coming soon, there shall be known no more devouring lions, no blood-thirsty tigers, no creatures that shall devour their kind—God shall restore to us again, and even to the beasts of the field, the blessing which Adam lost.

And, my friends, there is a worse curse than that which has fallen on this world. It is the curse of ignorance and sin—that, too, is to be removed. See yonder planet? It is whirling along

through space— bright, bright and glorious. Hear the morning stars sing together because this new sister of theirs is made? That is the earth! She is bright now. Stay! Did you remark that shadow sweep across her? What caused it? The planet is dimmed, and on her trace there lies a sorrowful shadow. I am speaking, of course, metaphorically. See there the planet; she glides along in ten-fold night—scarcely does a speck of light irradiate her. Mark again—the day is not come, when that planet shall renew her glory—but it is hastening again! As the serpent slips its slough, and leaves it behind it in the valley, so yon planet has slipped its clouds, and shone forth bright as it was before! Do you ask who has done it? Who has cleared away the mist? Who has taken away the darkness? Who has removed the clouds? “I have done it,” says Christ, the sun of righteousness! “I have scattered darkness, and made that world bright again.” Lo, I see a new heaven, and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness. To explain myself, lest I should be mistaken, I mean this—this world is now covered with sin, ignorance, mistake, idolatry, and crime. The day is coming when the last drop of blood shall be drunk by the sword; it shall be no more intoxicated with blood; God shall make wars to cease unto the ends of the earth! The day is coming—oh that it were now!—when the feet of Christ shall tread this earth! Then, down shall go idols from their thrones; down superstitions from their pinnacles; then, slavery shall cease; then, crime shall end; then, peace shall spread its joyous wings over the entire world! And then, shall you know that Christ has died for the world, and that Christ has won it! “The whole creation,” said Paul, “groans and travails in pain together until now.” Waiting for what? “Waiting for the redemption,” and by the redemption, I understand what I have just explained to you—that this world shall be washed of all her sin! Her curse shall be removed, her stains taken away, and this world shall be

as fair as when God first struck her from His mind—as when like a glowing spark, smitten from the anvil by the eternal hammer, she first flashed in her orbit. This, Christ has redeemed. This, Christ shall and most assuredly must have!

II. And, now, a word or two concerning the last thought—**“PLENTEOUS REDEMPTION.”**

It is plenteous enough, if you consider what I have already told you Christ has bought. Surely I could have made it no more plenteous if I had lied against my conscience, and told you that He had bought every man; for of what use is it that I am bought with blood, if I am lost? Of what use is it to me that Christ has died for me, if I yet sink in the flames of hell? How will that glorify Christ—that He has redeemed me, and yet failed in His intentions? Surely it is more to His honor to believe that according to His immutable, sovereign, and all-wise will, He laid the foundation as wide as He intended the structure to be, and then made it just according to His will. Nevertheless, it is “plenteous redemption.” Very briefly, lend me your ears just a moment.

It is “plenteous” when we consider the millions who have been redeemed. Think, if you can, how great that host who have already washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. And then think how many now with weary feet are plodding their way to paradise—all of them redeemed—they all shall sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb! Is it not “plenteous redemption” when you reflect that it is a “multitude that no man can number,” that will be gathered in? Let us close that by saying, “And why not *you*?” If so many are redeemed, why should not *you* be? Why should you not seek for mercy on the strength of that, knowing that all who seek will most assuredly receive, for they would not have sought unless it had been prepared for them?

It is “plenteous,” again, if we consider the *sins* of all who are redeemed. However great the sins of any redeemed soul, this redemption is enough to cover it all—to wash it all away—

“What, though your numerous sins exceed
The stars that spread the skies,
And aiming at the eternal throne,
Like pointed mountains rise.”

Yet His plenteous redemption can take all your sins away! They are no greater than Christ foresaw and vowed to remove. Therefore, I beseech you, fly to Jesus believing that however great your guilt, His atonement is great enough for all who come to Him, and, therefore, you may safely come!

Remember, again, that this “plenteous redemption” is plenteous because it is enough for all the distresses of all the saints. Your needs are almost infinite; but this atonement is quite so. Your troubles are almost unutterable; but this atonement is quite unutterable. Your needs can scarcely be counted; but this redemption I know you cannot count! Believe, then, that it is a “plenteous redemption.” O believing sinner, what a sweet comfort it is for you, that there is “plenteous redemption,” and that you have a lot in it! You will most certainly be brought safely home by Jesus’ grace. Are you seeking Christ? Or rather, do you know yourselves to be sinners? If you do, I have authority from God to say to everyone who will confess his sins, that Christ has redeemed him! “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” Are you a sinner? I do not mean a sham sinner; there are lots of them about, but I have no gospel to preach to them just now. I do not mean one of those hypocritical sinners, who cry, “Yes, I am a sinner”—who are sinners out of compliment, and do

not mean it. I will preach another thing to you—I will preach against your selfrighteousness another day. But I shall not preach anything to you just now about Christ, for He “came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” But are you a sinner, in the *bona fide* sense of the word? Do you know yourself to be a lost, ruined, undone sinner? Then, in God’s name, I urge you to believe this—that Christ has died to save you—for as sure as ever He has revealed to you, your guilt by the Holy Spirit, He will not leave you till He has revealed to you your pardon by His only Son! If you know your lost estate, you shall soon know your glorious estate! Believe in Jesus now! Then you are saved and you may go away happy—blest beyond what kings could dream! Believe that since you are a sinner, Christ has redeemed you—that just because you know yourself to be undone, guilty, lost and ruined— you have this night a right, a privilege, and a title to bathe in the fountain filled with blood, “shed for many for the remission of sins.” Believe that, and then you shall know the meaning of this text— “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, by whom also we have received the atonement.” God dismiss you with a blessing, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

352 A MERRY CHRISTMAS – JOB. 1:4-5

**A Sermon
Delivered on Sabbath Morning, December 23th, 1860,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At Exeter Hall, Strand**

“And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.” — Job 1:4-5

JOB WAS an exceedingly happy man before his great trial. He was as much blessed in the fruit of his body as in his basket, and in his store. Our text gives us a very pleasing picture of Job's family. He was a happy man to have had so many children all comfortably settled in life; for you will perceive that they all had houses; they had left his roof; they had all established themselves, and had so prospered in the world that there was not one of them who had not enough of the world's goods to entertain all the rest. So it seemed as if Job's prosperity in his business had attended his children in the different places where they had settled. To add to his comfort they were an undivided family—not like Abraham's household, where there was an Ishmael who mocked Isaac; nor like Isaac's household, where there was an Esau and a Jacob who sought to supplant him; nor like Jacob's household, where there was a Joseph, and all

the rest of his brothers were envious and jealous of him; nor like David's household, where there was perpetual strife and bickering between the one and the other. Job's descendants were a large tribe; but they were all united and knit together in bonds of perfect happiness; and moreover, they seem to have had a great desire to preserve their unity as a family. Perhaps Job and his family were the only ones who feared God in the neighborhood; they wished therefore to keep themselves together as a little flock of sheep in the midst of wolves, as a cluster of stars in the midst of the thick darkness; and what a brilliant constellation they were—all of them shining forth and proclaiming the truth of God! I say it was their desire not only to enjoy pleasantness and peace, but to maintain it; for I think that these annual meetings at the different houses were intended to knit them together, so that if any little strife had arisen, as soon as they met at the next brother's house, all might be settled, and the whole host might go on again, shoulder to shoulder, and foot to foot—as one army of soldiers for God. I think Job must have been a right happy man. I do not know that he always went to their feasts; perhaps the soberness of age might have a little disqualified him for joining in their youthful enjoyments; but I am sure he commended their feasting; I am quite certain he did not condemn it. If he had condemned it, he would never have offered sacrifice to God, *lest* they should have sinned, but he would have told them at once it was a sinful thing, and that he could give no countenance to it. I think I see the happy group, so happy and holy that surely if David had been there, he would have said, "Behold how good and pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

Job was a godly man and so godly that unlike Eli, he brought up his household in the fear of God, and he was not only quick to observe any known sin, but was exceedingly

jealous over his children, lest secretly and inadvertently in their hearts—while they were at their loaded tables—they might have said or thought anything which might be termed blaspheming God! He therefore, as soon as the feasting was over, called them all together and then as a preacher, told them of the danger to which they were exposed, and as a priest, (for every patriarch before the law, was a priest), he offered burnt sacrifices lest any sin should by any possibility remain upon his sons and daughters. So says the text. I pray that now we may have divine grace to listen to it; and may what we shall now hear abide with us during the coming week, when some of you shall meet together in your own houses! May God grant that our parents, or we, if we are parents, may be as Jobs, and when the feasting is over, may there come the sacrifice and the prayer, lest we should have sinned and blasphemed God in our hearts!

I shall divide my sermon thus. First, *the text*, and that is *festive*, so we will ring in a merry bell. Secondly, that which is *in* the text, and that is *instructive*, so we will ring the sermon bell. And, thirdly, *that which follows the text*, and that is *afflictive*, so we will ring the funeral bell.

I. First, then, the text itself, and that is festive—let us therefore, **RING THE MERRY BELL.** I think I hear distinctly three notes in its merry peal. First, the text gives a license; secondly, it suggests a caution; and thirdly, it provides a remedy.

1. First, the text gives a *license*. Now, you souls who would deny to your fellow men all sorts of mirth, come and listen to the merry bell of this text while it gives a license especially to the righteous—a license that they meet together in their houses, and eat and drink and praise their God. In Cromwell's days, the Puritans thought it an ungodly thing for men to keep Christmas. They, therefore, tried to put it down, and the common crier went through the street announcing that Christmas was henceforth no more to be kept, it being a Popish, if not a

heathen ceremony! Now, you do not suppose that after the crier had made the proclamation, any living Englishman took any notice of it! At least, I can scarcely imagine that any did, except to laugh at it; for it is idle thus to strain at gnats and stagger under a feather! Albeit that we do not keep the feast as Papists—nor even as a commemorative festival—yet, there is something in old associations, that makes us like the day in which a man may shake off the cares of business, and disport himself with his little ones. God forbid I should be such a Puritan, as to proclaim the annihilation of any day of rest which falls to the lot of the laboring man! I wish there were a half-a-dozen holidays in the year. I wish there were more opportunities for the poor to rest. Though I would not have as many saint's days as there are in Roman Catholic countries—yet, if we had but one or two more days in which the poor man's household, and the rich man's family might meet together—it might, perhaps, be better for us. However, I am quite certain that all the preaching in the world will not put Christmas down—you *will* meet next Tuesday, and you *will* feast, and you *will* rejoice, and each of you, as God has given you substance, will endeavor to make your household glad!

Now, instead of telling you that this is all wrong, I think the merry bell of my text gives you a license to do so. Let us think a minute. Feasting is *not* a wrong thing, or otherwise Job would have forbidden it to his children; he would have talked to them seriously, and admonished them that this was an ungodly and wicked custom to meet together in their houses. But, instead of this, Job only *feared* lest a wrong thing should be made out of a right thing, and offered sacrifices to remove their iniquity; but he did by no means condemn it. Would any of you ask a blessing upon your children's attendance at the theater? Could you say, when they had been in such a place, "It may be they have sinned?" No, you would only talk thus of a right thing.

I think I can prove to you that this was a good thing, for first you will notice they met in *good houses*; they did not go to an ale house to feast; they had no need to enter the tavern; but they met in their own houses—houses where prayer and praise were made. How much better for the working man to spend his money on his family, than upon liquor sellers! And then it was *in good company*. They did not scrape together all the ruffians of the place to feast with them; but they kept to their own kith and kin; and feasting is good when good men feast—especially when they spare for the poor—as no doubt Job's children did, or else they were quite unworthy of their generous ancestor. They feasted in good houses, and in good company. And they observed during their feasting, good behavior. Job never heard of a wrong expression they had used; no one ever told him that they had become riotous, or that they had uttered one wrong word, or else Job could not have said, "It *may* be," but he would have said, "It *is* so." He must be a good son of whom a father could say, "It may be he has erred." All that he had was a *fear* lest secretly they might have done wrong; but it appears that openly their feasting had been such that even the busy tongue of scandal could not find fault with them! And besides, their feasting was a good thing, because it had a good intent; it was for amity, for cheerfulness, and family union. It was that they might be bound together as a bundle of rods—strong and unbroken—that they might be as a strongly intertwined cord, interwoven by these their family greetings and meetings. Now, I say that if in their case the thing was not wrong—and I think I have proved in four respects that it was right—it was in good houses, in good company, with good behavior, and for a good purpose—the text gives a license for us to do the same, and to meet in our houses, in the company of our kith and kin, provided we feast after a good sort, and do it with the good intent of knitting our hearts, the one towards the other.

But again—*good men of old have feasted*. Need I remind you of Abraham’s making a great feast in his house when his child Isaac was weaned? Shall I tell you of Samson and his feasts, or of David, or of Hezekiah, or of Josiah, and of the kings who gave to every man a loaf of bread, and a good piece of meat, and a flagon of wine, and they cheered their hearts and made merry before God?

But, let me remind you that feasting, so far from being evil, was even an essential part of divine worship under the old law. Do you not read of the feast of trumpets, the feast of tabernacles, the feast of the passover, the feast of the new moons, and how many other feasts besides? Come they not over again and again? Now if the thing were wrong in itself, God would certainly never employ it as an emblem and token of the divine, the pure, and the heavenly doctrines of His grace. It is impossible that God should have taken a wrong thing to be the *type* of a right thing! He might take a common good and make it the type of a special favor—but not an evil thing—it is far from us to suppose such a thing of our God!

Besides, did not the Savior Himself countenance a feast, and help to provide the guests with the wherewithal that they might have good cheer? Do you think the Savior out of place when He went to the wedding feast? And do you suppose that He went there, and did not eat and drink? Was it not said of Him, “Behold a drunken man and a wine bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners”? Not that He was either drunken, or a wine bibber, but that He “came eating and drinking,” to dash to pieces the Phariseeism which says that that which goes into a man defiles a man—whereas Christ teaches “not that which goes *into* a man, but that which *comes out* of a man, *that* defiles a man.” Jesus Christ, I say, was at the feast! And suppose you that He bore a sad countenance? Did He sour with the vinegar of a morose behavior, the wine with which He had filled the

watering pots? I think not! I believe at that marriage feast He joined with the guests; and if He were, indeed, “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,” as He certainly was, yet, did He not keep His griefs to Himself; for if He came to suffer; He came to make others glad, and I doubt not that at the feast He seemed the most glad of the guests! Most glad because He was really the Master of the feast, and because He saw in the wedding the type of His own marriage— His own divine espousal with the Church—which is “the bride, the Lamb’s wife.”

And let me add once more—God has certainly made in this world, provision for man’s feasting. He had not given just dry bread enough for a man to eat, and keep body and soul together, for the harvests teem with plenty, and often are the barns filled to bursting. O Lord, You did not give simply dry bread and water for mankind, but You have filled the earth with plenty, and milk and honey have You given to us! And You have besides this laden the trees with fruit, and given dainties to men. You are not stingy, You do not dole out with miserable hands the lean and scanty charity which some men would give to the poor, but You give generously, and You upbraid not! And for what purpose is this given? Is it to rot, to mold, to be trod on, to be spoiled? No, but that men may have more than enough! That they may have all they need, and may rejoice before their God, and may feed the hungry, for this indeed is one essential and necessary part of all true Christian feasting! My text, I say, rings a merry bell, and gives *us* license for sacred feasting!

2. But now the same merry bell suggests a *caution*. Job said—“It *may* be.” They were good sons. Good, godly young men, I am sure, or else Job would not have said, “It *may* be.” But “It *may* be,” he said, “it may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts.” Or, as some translate it, “have

blessed God too little in their hearts.” They may not have been grateful enough for their prosperity, and for the enjoyments which God had given them. “It *may* be.” Well, listen, brothers and sisters, “It *may* be,” too, that you and I may sin, and blaspheme God in our hearts, and be as Job’s sons may have been—too little thankful—if, though they were true men and true women, though they all had a Job for their father, and though their feasting was in their own houses, and after a right sort and a commendable sort, yet there was a “*may* be” that there might be sin. Am I too careful when I say, brothers and sisters, “It *may* be”? *It may be* that in our happiest gathering of our family together, it *may* be that we shall sin? I think we could not prefer ourselves before the sons and daughters of Job—that were self-righteousness, indeed—we are surely not proud enough to think ourselves better than the sons of that “perfect and upright” man “who feared God and eschewed evil.” I think I am not too severe and too strict, when I say, “It *may* be; ‘it’ *may* be; look to it—take heed—be careful, be on your watch tower. Let me give you some reasons and arguments why this caution is not unnecessary.

And first, remember there is *no place* free from sin! You may set bounds about this mount, but the beast *will* touch the mountain. You may endeavor as much as you will to keep out Satan, but wherever there were two met together, Satan was ever the third. There was never a company met, but the Evil One somewhere intruded! Does he not come into your business? Do you not find him entering into your very closet? Yes, and the very table of the Lord—has not Satan sat there and tempted Judas? Yes, and tempted you, too? How, then, can you hope that when your family are met together, Satan shall not be there? Is it not written, “The sons of God came together and Satan came also among them”? I am sure they never invited him; but he does not stay away for all that. And you will find it

so. Never invite him by anything ungodly or unChristian-like. But since there are temptations everywhere, however pure and upright your intentions may be, however excellent your company, think you hear my little bell ringing—“It may be, it may be, it may be;” and it may be a blessed check to you.

Beside this, remember that there is many a special temptation where there is a loaded table. Old Quarles said, “Snares attend my board;” and certainly they do. More men have perished by fullness of bread than ever died by hunger. Hunger may break through stone walls, but I have known feasting leap over golden walls—the golden walls of divine grace. Some men cut their throats with their teeth, and many a man has swam to hell down his own throat! More have been drowned in the bowl, ‘tis said, than ever were drowned in the sea. I trust I need not say anything of that to you. I hope not. If there is a man here who falls into drunkenness—in God’s name let him tremble—for there is no admittance for the drunkard into the kingdom of heaven! I am speaking now to Christians—not to men and women who fall into *these* vices—and I say to them, where you use the most proper moderation in receiving the things which God gives you, where you even totally abstain from that which might be a temptation, yet even *there*, your table may be a snare unto you. Therefore, take heed to yourself, believer, lest Satan lie in ambush beneath the family table!

Remember, also, that they who sit at the table are but men, and the best of men are but men at the best. Men have so little grace, that if they are not on the watchtower, they may soon be overtaken, and they may say or do that which they will have to repent of afterwards. I have heard say that there are men who swallow mouthfuls of earth which they will have to digest in hell, and I do not doubt it. There have been times when a happy company has gathered together and the conversation has

become trifling, then full of levity; perhaps it has gone so far that afterwards, when they retired to their homes, they would have recalled their words, if it had been possible. Let this caution, then, sound in all our ears, “It may be—it may be—it may be!” And let us so act that if Christ were at the feast, we should not be ashamed to see Him. Let us so speak that if Christ sat at our table, we should not count it a hindrance to our joy— but rather that we should be the freer, joyous and glad—because of such thrice-blessed Company! Oh, tell me not that Christianity curbs our joy! My brothers and sisters, it shuts up one of its channels—that black and filthy kennel into which the sinner’s joy must run; but it opens another channel, wider, broader, deeper, purer, and fills it to the very banks with joy, more lustrous and fuller of glory! Think not that we who follow Christ, and seek to walk strictly in our integrity, are miserable! We tell you that our eyes sparkle as much as yours, and that, we have not the redness of the eyes in the morning. We can say to the worldling that our heart, despite its sometimes heaviness, *does* rejoice in the Lord, and we have peace which is like a river, and a righteousness which is like the waves of the sea! O Christian brothers and sisters! Let not the world think of you that you are shut out *here* from anything like happiness; but so act and so live at all times, that you may teach men that it is possible to be happy without sin, and to be holy without being morose! This, then, is the caution which our merry bell rings out to us.

But, then, in the third place, having given a license and suggested a caution, the merry bell *provides a remedy*. “It may be”—it may be we have done wrong. What then? Here is a remedy to be used by parents, and heads of families, and by ourselves.

Job sent for his sons as a *father*; he sanctified them as a *preacher*; he sacrificed for them as a *priest*; by all which I

understand, he first bade them come together, and then he sanctified them—that is, he first spoke to them—commended them for the excellent and admirable manner in which they had met together; told them how pleased he was to see their love, their union. But then he said, “It may be, my sons, you are like your father—there is some sin in you, and it may be you have sinned. Come, let us repent together.” And so, being, as I believe, all godly persons, they sat down and thought over their ways. Then no doubt the good old man bade them kneel down while he prayed with them. And then he expressed his faith in the great coming Mediator and so, though one man’s faith cannot prevail for another, yet the faith of the father helped to quicken the faith of the sons! The prayer of the father was the means of drawing forth the prayer of the sons, and so the family was sanctified. Then after that, he would say, “There is no putting away of sin, except by the shedding of blood. So they fetched the bullocks, a bullock for every son, and for every daughter; the old patriarch slew the victims, and laid them on the altar, and as the smoke ascended—they all thought, if they had sinned against God, yet by His grace, the bloodshed, and the victim offered could, as the type of Christ, take away their sin. I think I see the good old man after the sacrifice was all complete—“Now, my children,” he says, “return to your homes. If you have sinned, your sin is put away; if you have transgressed, the atonement made has cancelled your transgression; you may go to your habitations, and take a father’s blessing with you.”

Call to your recollection that Job is said to have seen to his sacred work “early in the morning.” It is evil lying in bed when we have sin on our conscience. He that has a sin unforgiven should never travel slowly to the cross but *run* to it! So Job would sleep in the morning not an hour till he had seen his sons and his daughters sanctified, and the sacrifice made. Mark well,

that “He offered according to the number of his sons.” He did not leave out one! If he prayed for the eldest, he prayed for the youngest, too— and if he made supplication for the sons, he did not forget the daughters! Ah, parents, never forget *any* of your children—carry them *all* before God—let them all be consecrated to Him, and let your earnest prayers go up for them all—from your Reuben down to your Benjamin. Leave not one of them out, but pray God to grant that they may all be bound up together in the bundle of life.

And notice once again, “So did Job continually.” As often as they visited, so often was there the sacrifice. I suppose they had 10 feasts in the year; and it is supposed by the old commentators that they assembled on their birthdays. They were not *always* feasting—that were sinful. In fact, that was the sin of the old world, for which God drowned it. “They ate and they drank, they married and they were given in marriage,” all which things are right enough in themselves. But if we are wholly immersed in them, always eating, always drinking, always feasting, *then* they become *sins*, and indeed, at all times they become sin, unless, like Job’s feasts, they are sanctified by the Word of God and prayer. If our meetings are thus sanctified, we can in everything give thanks. Then “He that eats, eats to the Lord, and gives God thanks.” And being accepted in our thankfulness, the eating is to God’s glory! I say, then, my dear friends, that Job did this continually which teaches to the parent his duty of continually pleading for his sons and daughters.

The aim of my remarks is just this—you will, most of you, meet together next Tuesday and keep the household feast. I beg you to imitate Job on Wednesday morning and make it your special and peculiar business to call your children together, and sanctify them by prayer, and by pleading the precious sacrifice of Christ Jesus. So “it may be” there has been sin; but there will be no “may be” as to the putting away of the sin, for

pleading with prayer, and laying hold on the sacrifice by faith, you shall stand accepted still—both you and your households!

Now, some may think that what I have said upon this point is unnecessary, and that we ought not to speak about such common things as these. Do you suppose that the Christian pulpit was set up by God that we might always talk to you about the millennium, or the antediluvians, or the things that are to happen in Ethiopia or Palestine? I believe that the Christian ministry has to do with *you in your daily life*—and the more the preacher delivers that which is practically suggestive of profit to our souls—the more closely does he keep to the Master! I am sure if my Lord Jesus Christ were here, He would say somewhat in these words to you, “Go your way, and eat your bread with a joyous heart, for God has accepted you through My blood; but watch and be you as men and women who look for their Lord; still keep your lamps trimmed, and your lights burning, and your loins girt about. Be steadfast and watch unto prayer, that should I come in the morning, or at cock-crowing, I may find you ready for My appearing.”

As for you young men and women who will be separated on that day from your own parents—having no family circle in which to join—perform this pleasant privilege yourselves. Set apart a season the next morning in which by prayer and supplication you shall make confession of sin; and whenever the feast time comes round—whenever you are invited to a social meeting, or the like—look upon it as a necessary successor of the social gathering—that there is private supplication, private confession of sin, and a personal laying hold anew upon the great sacrifice. If this is done, your meetings, instead of being unprofitable, shall be the beginning of better days to you, and you shall even grow in grace through that prayer, that repentance, and that faith which have been suggested by your gatherings together.

I think all this is most fairly in my text. And if I ought not to preach from such a passage, then the text ought not to be in the Bible.

II. And now let us turn to the second head, or what is *in the text*, and that is instructive; we must, therefore, ring the **SERMON BELL**.

Well, it will be a short sermon. My sermon shall not be like the bell and preacher of St. Anthony's church which were said to be both alike—the bell was pulled a long while, and was exceedingly dreary in its tone, and the preacher was precisely the same. The sermon which is fairly in my text is this—if Job found it right with a holy jealousy to suspect lest his sons might have sinned, how much more do you think he suspected himself? Depend on it—he who was so anxious to keep his children clean, was himself more anxious that he might always fear his God and eschew evil! God said Job was a perfect and an upright man; and yet he was jealous! How much more, then, shall you and I be jealous of ourselves? Say not in your heart, Christian, “I may go here and there, and may not sin.” You are never out of danger of sinning! This is a world of mire; it will be hard to pick your path so as not to soil your garments. This is a world of pitch; you will need to watch often, if in handling it, you are to keep your hands clean. There is a robber in every turn of the road to rob you of your jewels; there is a thief behind every bush—there is a temptation in every mercy; there is a snare in every joy. There is not a stone on which you tread under which there is not a viper's nest; and if you shall ever reach heaven, it will be a miracle of divine grace! If you shall ever come safely home to your Father's house, it will be because your Father's power brought you there! If Job's sons were in danger at their own tables, how much more are some of you in danger, Christians, when you have to go among the ungodly? It may be that some of you are called to do business

where you hear oaths and blasphemy; your way of life is such that you cannot help being exposed to many temptations. Be on your guard! It was said of a certain great man, that he was so afraid of losing his life, that he always wore armor under his clothes. Take care *you* always wear armor. When a man carries a bomb in his hand, he should mind that he does not go near a candle. And you too, must take care that you do not go near temptation. But if you are *called* to go through the temptation, how watchful, how anxious, how careful, and how guarded should you be! Brothers and sisters, I do not think that we are, any of us, watchful enough. I have heard of a good woman who would never do anything till she had sought the Lord in prayer about it. Is that our custom? If we do even a common thing without seeking the Lord's direction, we may have to repent it as long as we live! Even our common actions are sharp tools; we must mind how we handle them.

There is nothing in this world that can foster a Christian's piety, but everything that can destroy it. How anxious should we be, then, to look up—to look up to God—that *He* may keep us! Let your prayer be, "Hold me up, and I shall be safe." Let your daily cry be, especially you young Christians, yes and you old Christians too, "Lord, keep me! Keep my heart, I pray You, for out of it are the issues of my life." Do not expose yourselves unnecessarily, but if called to exposure; if you have to go where the darts are flying, never go abroad without your shield! For if once the devil catches you abroad, and your shield at home, then he will say, "Now is my time!" And he will send an arrow which may rattle between the joints of your harness, and you may fall down wounded, even though you cannot be slain. The Lord grant, then, that this sermon bell of my text may ring in your ears during the next week; and as long as ever you live, may you hear it saying to you, "Be careful; be watchful; be vigilant; danger may be in an hour when all seems secure to

you.” Inspect the vessel, see to her keel; look to the sails; look to the rudder bands; watch every part of the ship, for the storm may be coming though the calm rule at present, and the rocks may be ahead though the breakers roll not, and the quicksand may underlie your keel, though you think all is well. God help you then, Christian, to watch unto prayer! What we say unto you, we say unto all—WATCH!

III. But now what follows the text—and that is afflictive—and here let us ring the **FUNERAL BELL**.

What follows the text? Why hear this, “Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother’s house; and behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men and they are dead, and I only am escaped alone to tell you.” Between the table and the coffin there is but a step; between the feast and the funeral there may be but a day; and the very bell that rings the marriage peal tolls the funeral knell! Here is a death’s head for you to put on your table. The old Egyptians set a corpse among the guests—that all might know that they must die. I set the bodies of Job’s sons and daughters at your table—to make you think that *you* will die! Our very eating is the grave of God’s mercies, and should remind us of our own graves. What do we do when we eat but patch the old tenement, put fresh plaster on the dilapidated and naked rafters? So, then, we should remember that the time will come when we can no more do this, but when the tenement itself shall be shaken and be blown down. Sinner! Let no joy cross your face till death and you are friends. Saint! Let no joy be in your heart either, till you can say, “Welcome, death; I gladly go with you.” Do nothing that you would not willingly die doing! Be found in no position in which you would be unwilling to stand forever. Be you today what you would wish to be in eternity; and so live and so act and so sit at the table

that if the wind should come and smite the four corners of the house, and you should die, yet you fall asleep at one feast, to wake up at another feast where there would be no, “may be,” about sin, but where you should eat bread in the kingdom of God and drink the new wine of which Jesus Christ spoke when He rose from the supper and left His disciples! Ah, my spirit rises on wings of delight at the solemn tones of that funeral knell—for it has more music in it, after all—than my merry bell! There is a pleasing joy in sorrow, and mirth is akin to sadness. Harken, friends, the bell is speaking, “GONE, GONE, GONE, GONE.” “Who is that for? Who is dead in this parish?” “That is poor So-and-So.” My God, when it shall be my turn, may my soul behold Your face with joy; O may my spirit, when it receives the last summons, cry with delight, “Blessed be God for that sound! It was the merriest sound my soul could have desired, for now I sit with Jesus, and eat at His table, and feast with angels! And I am satisfied and have the privilege of John—to lean my head upon my Savior’s breast.” Christian! I say never let the thought of dying plague you. Let it be a comfort to you, and stand you so ready that when the Master shall say, “Arise!” you will have nothing to do but to rise at His bidding, and march to heaven—leading your captivity captive!

But you, sinner, when you are sitting at your table, remember my funeral bell tolling in your ears. And if you should step aside, and the rest should say, “What ails you?”—if you should be compelled to rise while they are laughing, and go upstairs to pray, I shall not mind. Though some may say I have made you melancholy and have marred your feast—sinner it is no time for you to be feasting while God’s sword is furbished and sharp, and ready to divide soul from body! There is a time to laugh, but it is not till sin is pardoned that there is time to dance; it is not till the heart stands with joy before the Ark, that there is time to make merry—it is not till *sin is forgiven*.

Your time is a time to weep, and a time to tear your garments, and a time to sorrow and a time to repent. May God's Holy Spirit give you the grace! The time is *now*. And the grace being given, may you fall before the cross and find pardon and mercy there, and then we may say, in the words of Solomon—"Go your way; eat your bread with joy and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God now accepts your works."

**353 THE CLEANSING OF THE LEPER –
LEV. 13:12-13**

**A Sermon
Delivered on Sabbath Morning, December 30th, 1860,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At Exeter Hall, Strand**

“And if a leprosy breaks out abroad in the skin, and the leprosy covers all the skin of him that has the plague, from his head even to his foot, wherever the priest looks; then the priest shall consider: and, behold, if the leprosy has covered all his flesh, he shall pronounce him clean that has the plague: it is all turned white: he is clean.” — Leviticus 13:12-13

THIS IS an amazing paradox, but not a paradox to him who understands the gospel. We have great reason to thank God that the terrible disease, leprosy, which was one of the demons of the East, is so little known in our own land; and even in the few cases where leprosy has broken out in our climate, it has always assumed a far more mild and mitigated shape than it did with the Jews in the land of Canaan. Yet, since they had so frightful a disease, God, in His infinite mercy, made use of it as a sort of sermon to the people. Leprosy is to be considered by us as being the type of *sin*; and as we read the chapters in Leviticus, which concern the shutting up or putting apart, and the purification of a cleansed leper, we are to understand every sentence as having in it a gospel sermon to us, teaching us what is the condition of a sinner in the sight of God, how that sinner

is to be cured, and how he can be restored to the privileges from which the leprosy of sin had utterly shut him out.

I shall need no preface, for the subject is deeply interesting, and will be found especially so by many of us who can use the language of David in the psalm which we have just read. If we have come up here conscious of guilt, and laden with iniquity, I am quite certain, and I speak positively and confidently, there will be something in the discourse of this morning to cheer our hearts, and to send us home rejoicing in the Lord our God. Carry in your thoughts the one key to our text, namely, that leprosy is the great type of *sin*; and I shall want you, first of all, to *see the leper*, and to *see in the leper the sinner*. After we have well looked to him, we shall *bring him before the priest, and stand still while the priest examines him*. This done, and the sentence being pronounced, we shall *listen attentively to the announcement of the rites and ceremonies which were necessary in order to cleanse this leper*, which were but representations of the way whereby we too must be cleansed. And then, we shall have a little time to notice *certain rites which follow after cleansing*, which were not the cause of the cleansing itself, but necessary before the man could actually enjoy the privileges which the cleansing gained for him.

I. First, then, let me ask you to turn your eyes to the **LOATHSOME AND GHASTLY SPECTACLE OF A LEPER.**

A leper was extremely *loathsome in his person*. The leprosy broke out at first almost imperceptibly in certain red spots which appeared in the skin. They were painless, but they gradually increased. Perhaps the man who was the subject of the complaint scarcely knew that he had it at all, but it increased, and further and further, and further it spread. The perspiration was unable to find a vent, and the skin became dry and peeled off in scales. The withering of the skin was too true an index of what was going on within, for in the very marrow of the bones there was a most frightful rottenness, which in due time would

utterly consume the victim. The man would eat and drink; he would perform what is called by the physician, the *naturalia*—all the functions would be discharged as if in health. All things would go on as before, and he would be subject to very little pain; but by degrees the bones would rot, in many cases the fingers would drop off, and yet without any surgical operation, the rest of the body was healthy, so that there was no bleeding. When it came to its very worst phase, the body itself would drop altogether—all the strings being loosened, the whole house of manhood would become a horrible mass of animated rubbish, rather than the stately temple which God originally made it. I could not in your presence this morning describe all the loathsomeness and ghastliness of the aggravated cases of Jewish leprosy; it would be too sickening, if not disgusting. But let me remind you that this, fearful as it seems to be, is a very poor portrait of the loathsomeness of sin. If God could tell or, rather, if we could bear to hear what God could tell us of the exceeding wickedness and uncleanness of sin, I am sure we should die! God hides from all eyes but His own, the blackness of sin. There is no creature, not even an angel before the throne of God that ever knew the intolerable wickedness of rebellion against God. Yet, that little of it which God the Holy Spirit taught you and me when we were under conviction of sin was enough to make us feel that we wished we had never been born. Ah, well must I confess, though my life was kept and preserved as a child from outward immorality, when I first saw myself as I was by nature, and in the thoughts and intents and imaginations of my heart, I thought that even devils in hell could not be baser than myself! Certain I am that, whenever the Spirit of God comes into the soul, our good opinion of ourselves soon vanishes. We thought we were all that heart could wish—but when once taught of God the Holy Spirit—we think that we are vile and full of sin, that there is no good

thing whatever in us. Loathsome, I say, as was the leper; it is not more so in the *type* than is sin in the estimation of every enlightened mind.

Think again. The leper was not only loathsome in his person, but was *defiled in all his acts*. If he drank out of a vessel, the vessel was defiled. If he lay upon a bed, the bed became unclean, and whoever sat upon the bed afterwards became unclean, too; if he touched but the wall of a house, the wall became unclean and must be purged. Wherever he went, he tainted the atmosphere; his breath was as dangerous as the pestilence. He shot baneful glances from his eyes. All that he did was full of the same loathsomeness as was he. Now, this may seem to be a very humiliating truth, but faithfulness requires us to say it—all the actions of the natural man are tainted with sin! Whether he eats, or drinks, or whatever he does, he continues to sin against his God! No, if he should come up to God's house and sing and pray, there is sin in his songs for they are but hypocrisy—there is guilt in his prayers, for the prayers of the wicked are abominations unto the Lord. Let him attempt to perform holy actions, he is like Uzziah, who laid hold upon the censer of the priest while the leprosy was on his brow till he was glad enough to retire from the sacred place, lest he should be struck dead! Oh, when we saw or thought we saw the sinfulness of sin, this was one of the darkest parts of it that we discovered—all our actions were stained and tainted with evil! I know not whether I have any in this congregation who are prepared to deny what I assert. If there are, it is my duty to solemnly assure them that they are unclean and covered with an incurable leprosy; they are hopeless lepers who cannot be cleansed, for no man can be cleansed of sin till he is ready to confess that he is all unholy and unclean! Submission to this truth is absolutely necessary to salvation! I am not to condemn any man, but still I must speak God's Word, and speak it in

loving faithfulness—if you do not confess that all your actions before you were regenerate, were full of sin and abominable in the sight of God—you have not yet learned what you are, and it is not likely that you will wish to know what a Savior is.

Think of the leper yet again. Being thus the medium of contagion and defilement wherever he went, the Lord demanded that he should be *shut out from the society of Israel*. There was a spot outside the camp, barren, solitary, where lepers were confined. They were commanded to wear a covering over the mouth, and upon the upper lip, and if any passed by, they were compelled to cry, “Unclean! Unclean! Unclean!” A sound which being muffled by reason of the covering which they wore, must have sounded more ghastly and deathlike than any other human cry. Some of the Rabbis translate the cry, “Avoid! Avoid! Avoid!” One of the American poets has put it, “Room for the leper! Room!” But certainly, the sense of it is generally understood to be, “Unclean! Unclean! Unclean!” Living apart from their dearest friends, shut out from all the pleasures of society, they were required never to drink from a running stream of water of which others might drink. Nor might they sit down on any stone by the roadside upon which it was probable any other person might rest. They were to all intents and purposes, dead to all the enjoyments of life—dead to all the endearments and society of their friends. Yes, and such is the case with the sinner with regard to the people of God. Do you not feel, poor convicted sinner, that you are unfit to join Christ's Church? You can go and find such mirth as the company of your fellow lepers can afford. But where God's people are, you are out of place. You feel in yourself that you are shut out from the communion of saints. You cannot pray their prayer nor sing their hymns. You know not their joys. You have never tasted of their perfect peace. You have never entered into the rest which remains for them, but which

remains *not for you* while you are such a one as you are now! This, however, is the fearful part of the leprosy of sin—that many, who are shut out from goodness, become contented with the exclusion. There are even some who pretend to despise the privileges which they cannot enjoy. Since they cannot be holy, they make holiness the theme of ridicule. Since they must not envy the delights of piety, they turn their heel upon them and say, “There is no joy in religion; nor bliss in love to Christ.” This is perhaps one of the most fearful parts of this leprosy of sin—that it deceives the man himself— makes him think himself to be healthy while he is full of disease, makes him imagine the healthy ones to be diseased, while he who is the true leper thinks himself to be the only sane person in the camp!

Once more, the leper was *wholly unable to come up to the house of God*. Other men might offer sacrifices, but not the leper; others had a share in the great High Priest’s sacrifice, and when he went within the veil, he appeared for all others; but the leper had neither part nor lot in this matter. He was shut out from God, as well as shut out from man; he was no partaker of the sacred things of Israel, and all the ordinances of the tabernacle were as nothing to him. Think of that, sinner! As a sinner full of guilt, you are shut out from all communion with God! True, He gives you the mercies of this life as the leper had his bread and water, but you have none of the spiritual joys which God affords to His people. You cannot stand in His presence, for He is a devouring fire and would consume you. Your prayers are shut out from Him, your words are unheard. You are a prodigal son, and your father is far from you! You have spent your substance in riotous living, and no man will give to you; you have become the companion of the swine, and you would gladly fill your belly with the husks which the swine eat. No father’s eyes greets you; at no father’s table do you sit; your father’s hired servants have bread enough to spare, but you

perish with hunger. Oh, sinner! If you who do not feel yourself to be as I describe you now, you will one day find it to be a very awful thing to be denied all fellowship with God, for at last you may seek in vain to cross your father's threshold. After death you will long to enter within the pearly gates, and you shall be thrust back, for lepers and defiling ones can never stand in the sanctified presence of the holy God! Where angels veil their faces, lepers shall not exhale their putrid breath! God drove Satan out of Paradise because he sinned, and will he always sin a second time to intrude into His presence? No, you shall find that as long as you and your sins are one, God will always be at war with you; as long as you are at peace with your guilt, the Eternal God draws His sword and vows eternal warfare with you!

Now, I wish I could more forcibly put the position of a sinner in God's sight this morning. Let me just recapitulate for a moment. Every man by nature is like a leper; loathsome in his person, infected in all his actions, and in all that he does; he is incapable of fellowship with God's people, and he is shut out utterly and entirely by his sin from the presence and acceptance of God.

II. Having thus described the leper and the sinner, I shall now **BRING THE LEPER UP TO THE HIGH PRIEST.**

There he stands; the priest has come out to meet him. Mark, whenever a leper was cleansed under the Jewish law—the leper did nothing—the priest did all. I invite you to read over this chapter when you are at home, and you will see that, previous to his being pronounced clean, the leper was passive—the priest did everything! Well, the priest comes out from the sanctuary, comes to the place of the lepers, where no other man might go—but he in his priestly office. He calls up one leper before him; he looks at him, and there is a spot on that leper which is not leprous—quick, raw, healthy flesh; the priest puts

him aside, he is an *unclean leper*. Here is another, and he has but one or two red spots appearing beneath the skin; all the rest of his body is perfectly sound, the priest puts him aside, he is an unclean leper. Here is another, he is from head to foot covered with a scaly whiteness of the filthy disease; the hair is all turned white, owing to the decay of the powers of nature which are now unable to nourish the roots of the hair. There is not a single speck of health in him from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot—all is pollution and filth. But listen! The high priest says to him, “You are *clean*.” And after certain necessary ceremonies, he is admitted into the camp, and afterwards into the very sanctuary of God! My text asserts that if there was found any *sound place* on him, he was *unclean*. But when the *leprosy had covered him*, wherever the priest looked, the man became by sacrificial rights a clean leper!

Now, let me bring up the sinner before the Great High Priest this morning. How many there are, who, as they come up here, are ready to confess that they have done many things which are wrong, but they say, “Though we have done much which we cannot justify, yet there have been many good actions which might almost counterbalance the sin. Have we not been charitable to the poor; have we not sought to instruct the ignorant; to help those who are out of the way? We have some sins, we do confess, but there is much at the bottom which is still right and good, and we therefore hope that we shall be delivered.” I put you aside in God’s name, this morning, as *unclean lepers*. For you, there is no hope and no promise of salvation whatever! Here comes a second. He admits with candor that he has a very great measure of guilt—perhaps not open immorality—but he confesses that his thoughts, and the imaginations of his heart have been evil and evil frequently. “But, still,” he says, “though I have neither one good work of which to boast, nor any righteousness in which to glory, yet I

do hope that by repentance I may amend. I trust that by a resolute persistence in good works, I may yet blot out my past life, and so may enter into heaven.” I set him aside as being an unclean leper, for whom cleansing rites are not provided. He is one who must still be kept outside the camp; he has not arrived at that stage in which it is possible for him to be made clean. But here comes another. Probably he is really a better man than either of the other two; but not in his own opinion. He stands before us and, with many a sigh and tears, confesses that he is utterly ruined and undone. “Sir, a month or two ago I would have claimed a righteousness with the very best of them. I, too, could have boasted of what I have done; but now, I see my righteousness to be as filthy rags, and all my goodness is as an unclean thing; I count all these things but dross and dung! I tread upon them and despise them; I have done no good thing; I have sinned and come short of the glory of God. If ever there was a sinner who deserved to be damned, sir, I am that soul! If ever there was one who had not any excuse to make, but who must plead guilty, without any extenuating circumstances, I am that man! As for the future, I can make no promise! I have often promised and so often lied; I have so often trusted in myself to reform; often have I hoped the energy of my nature might yet heal my disease that I renounce, because I cannot help renouncing all such desires. Lord, if ever I am made whole, Your grace must make me so. I do desire to be rid of sin, but I can no more rid myself of sin than I can pluck the sun from the firmament, or scoop the waters from the depth of the sea! I would be perfect, even as You are perfect, but I cannot change my heart. As well might the viper lose his will to poison, the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots, as I cease to do evil! Lord, at Your feet I fall, full of leprosy from head to foot. Nothing have I to boast of, nothing to trust to except Your mercy.”

My brother, you are a clean leper! Your sins are forgiven you; your iniquities are put away. Through the blood of Jesus Christ, who died upon the cross, you are saved. As soon as ever the leprosy had come right out, the man was clean, and as soon as ever your sin is fully manifest so that in your conscience you feel yourself to be really a *sinner*, there is a way of salvation for you! Then, by the sprinkling of blood, and the washing of water, you may be made clean! As long as a man has anything to boast of, there is no Christ for him; but the moment he has nothing of his own, Christ is his! While you are anything, Christ is nothing to you—but when you are nothing, Christ is everything! All the warrant that a sinner needs in coming to Christ is to know that he is a sinner, for “Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*.” Do I know myself to be a sinner? Then He came to save me, and there I rest, and there I trust. If I have any good feelings or good works which take away from me the power to call myself a sinner; or if they diminish the force and emphasis which I put upon the word when I use it, then may I fear that I have no right to come to Christ! Christ died, “The just for the unjust, to bring us to God.” Am I unjust? Do I honestly declare I am? “Christ died for the ungodly.” Am I ungodly; is this my grief and sorrow that I am ungodly? Then, Christ died for me. “I do not know,” said Martin Luther, “when men will ever believe that text in which it is written, *Christ died for our sins*. They *will* think that Christ died for our righteousness, whereas He died for our sins! Christ had no eye to our goodness when He came to save us, but to our badness.” A physician, when he comes to my house, has not an eye to my present health; he does not come there because I am healthy, but because I am sick; and the more sick I am, the more call for the physician’s skill and the more argument does my sickness yield why he should exercise all his craft, and use his best medicines on my behalf. Your only plea with Christ is your

guilt! Use it, sinner, use it as David did when he said, “Lord have mercy upon my iniquity, for it is great!” If he had said “Have mercy upon my iniquity, for it is little,” he would have been a legalist, and would have missed his mark. But when he said, “Have mercy, for it is great!” he understood the gospel riddle—that strange paradox at which Pharisees always kick, and which worldlings always hate—the glorious fact that Jesus Christ came into the world, “not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”

III. Having thus brought the man before the priest, we shall now briefly turn our attention to **THE CEREMONIES WHICH THE PRIEST USED IN THE CLEANSING OF THE LEPER.** I will read the verses quickly, and expound them briefly. “And the priest shall go forth out of the camp, and the priest shall look and, behold, if the plague of leprosy is healed in the leper, then shall the priest command to take for him that is to be cleansed, two birds alive and clean, and cedar wood, and scarlet and hyssop: and the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water: as for the living bird, he shall take it and the cedar wood, and the scarlet and the hyssop and shall dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water: and he shall sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from the leprosy, seven times and shall pronounce him clean and shall let the dying bird loose into the open field.” You will perceive, first, that *the priest went to the leper, not the leper to the priest.* We go not up to heaven first, till Christ comes down from His Father’s glory to the place where we, as lepers, are shut out from God. Oh, glorious High Priest, I think I see You this morning coming out from the tabernacle of the Most High where You have offered Your complete sacrifice, and You come down to us loathsome and abhorred sinners! You take upon Yourself the form of man; You do not disdain the

Virgin's womb; You come to sinners; You eat and drink with them! But the coming of the priest was not enough, *there must be a sacrifice*, and on this occasion, in order to set out the two ways by which a sinner is saved, there was *sacrifice mingled with resurrection*.

First, there was sacrifice. One of the birds was taken, and his blood was shed in a vessel which was full, as the Hebrew has it, of "living water"—of water which had not been stagnant, but which was clean. Just as when Jesus Christ was put to death, blood and water flowed from His side to be "of sin, a double cure," so in the earthen vessel there was received, first, the "living water," and then the blood of the bird which had just been slain. If sin is put away, it must be *by blood*. There is no way of putting sin from before the presence of God except by the streams which flow from the open veins of Christ! *It was nothing that the leper did*. You notice he does nothing whatever in the whole affair but stand still, and humbly partake of the benefits which are given to him through the mission of the priest, and through the slaughter of the bird. And then, the second bird was dipped into the blood until all its feathers were red and dropping with gore. It was doubtless tied round the cedar stick at the end of which was the hyssop to make a kind of brush. The bird's wings were tied along the stick, and the whole was dipped in the blood of the bird that was slain. And when this had been done seven times, the strings were cut and the living bird allowed to fly away. This is a lively picture of Christ! As a living bird, He ascends on high after being slain for us—scattering the red drops of atonement, He rises above the clouds which receive Him out of our sight, and there before His Father's throne, He pleads the full merit of the sacrifice which He offered for us once and for all!

The leper was made clean by *sacrifice* and by *resurrection*, but he was not clean till the blood was sprinkled on him. Christians,

the cross does not save us till Christ's blood is sprinkled on our conscience! Yet, the virtual salvation was accomplished for all the elect when Christ died for them upon the cross. It is the joy of every Christian to stand here saved by another! He knows that he is full of leprosy; that in himself there is no reason whatever why he should be cleansed. In fact, the reasons are all the other way—for there is every reason why he should continue to be shut out forever from the presence of God. But there stands the High Priest, the great Melchizedek, the Son of the Virgin, and the Son of God. He has offered His own blood for us. He who offered it, applies it to the conscience, and with this application—

“The Christian walks at large,
His Savior's blood, his full discharge!
At His dear feet his soul he'll lay,
A sinner saved and homage pay.”

But the saving of your soul rests not with yourself, but with Christ Jesus, just as the cleansing of the leper was not with the leper, but with the priest. How many there are among God's people, who say, “I know that Christ died for sinners, but I don't get any comfort from it because I do not *feel* as if I were saved.” That is self-righteousness in a very deceitful shape! You will not be saved by *feeling* that Christ died for you, but *by His dying for you*. If He died for you, you were saved when He died; if He took your sins, He took them in very deed, and they are not yours; if Christ was your substitute at all, then God can never punish two for one offense—first, the substitute and then, the sinner himself. If Christ really died for you, then your sins are pardoned, whether you *feel* that they are pardoned or not. “Yes,” says one, “but I need to realize that.” It is a very blessed thing to realize it, but it is not the *realizing* that saves—

it is the death of Christ that saves—not your realizing the death! If there is a lifeboat and some poor man is ready to drown, and some strong hand rescues him—when he comes to himself, he realizes that he is in the boat, but it is not the *realizing* that he is in the boat that saves him—it is the lifeboat. So it is Christ who saves the sinner, not the sinner's *feelings*, or *willings*, or *doings*; and in heaven the whole glory of salvation will be to the wounds of Jesus, and nothing else.

“But,” says one, “how am I to know Christ died for me?” You will never know it until you are willing to stand in the leper's place full of leprosy! If you know this day that you are full of sin; if you are conscious that in you, that is, in your flesh, there dwells no good thing, then it is written that Christ died for our sins, *according to the Scriptures*—not according to our *feelings*, but according to the Scriptures! How do I know that I am full of sin? Because I believe I am; because God tells me so—not merely because I feel it, but because God tells me so! How do I know that Christ died for me? Not because I feel it, but because God tells me so! He says Christ came into the world to save sinners. I am a sinner; I feel it; I know it; God forbid that I should be such a liar to myself as to deny it. *Then He came to save me.* “Come now, let us reason together; though your sins are as scarlet”—that is my case—“*they shall be as wool*”; though they are red like crimson”—that is my case—“*they shall be as snow.*” It is just this—if you are willing to stand today, condemned as a sinner, and nothing more than a sinner, then Christ died for you. Your business is to trust your soul on the fact that Christ did hang on the cross for sinners; for mark—faith is trusting Christ, and having done with self! Put your finger on any sound place in your flesh—you are a lost man! Point to *any* good thing that you can trust to, and there is no heaven for you. Rely on anything that you have felt, or thought, or said, or done, and you rely on a broken reed! But trust in

Christ, and Christ alone; cast your arms around His cross, and cling to that—you are saved—yet it will not be *the clinging*, it will be the *cross* that will save you! Do not trust your clinging! Trust the cross! Still to the cross flee away, you poor, lost, ruined ones, for under its shadow there is safety for the defenseless; there is hope even for the despairing!

IV. But pardon me while I keep you a minute or two longer to observe that **AFTER THE LEPER WAS CLEANSED, THERE WERE CERTAIN THINGS WHICH HE HAD TO DO.** Until he is cleansed, he is to do nothing. The sinner can do nothing towards his own salvation; his place is the place of death. Christ must be his life. The sinner is so lost that Christ must begin, and carry on and finish all—but when the sinner is saved—*then he begins to work* in right good earnest! When once he is no more a leper, but a leper cleansed—then for the love he bears his Master's name, there is no trial too arduous, no service too hard—he spends his whole strength in magnifying and glorifying his Lord! I want to call your attention to the further cleansing of the leper. Mark, he was wholly cleansed by the priest, and what was done afterwards was done by a *cleansed man*. “He that is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, and shave off all his hair, and wash himself in water.” Blood first; water afterwards. No cleansing from evil habits until there has been cleansing from sin! There is no making the nature clean till the guilt is put away. “He shall wash his clothes, and shave off his hair, and wash himself in water that he may be clean; and after that he shall come into the camp, and shall tarry abroad out of his tent seven days.” He did not tell him to wash, first; it would have been of no use to him whatever. He did not tell him to wash his clothes, and shave his hair first—

“No outward forms could make him clean,
The leprosy lay deep within.”

No, the Priest must do all the work first. After that, the leper must be washed. So sinner, if you are to be saved, Christ must do it all! But when once you have faith in Christ, you must be washed; then must you cease from sin and then, by the Holy Spirit's power, you shall be enabled to do so. What was ineffective before shall become mighty enough now through the life which God has put into you! The washing with water by the Word, and the cleansing of yourself from dead works shall become an effectual and mighty duty. You shall be made holy and walk in white in the purity wherewith Christ has endowed you. The shaving off of his hair was fitly to represent how all the old things were to pass away, and everything was to become new. All the white hair was to be cut off, as you read in the 9th verse—"He shall shave all the hair off his head, and his beard and his eyebrows." There was not a remnant or relic left of the old state in which the hair was white—all was to be given up. So it is with the sinner. When he is once pardoned, once cleansed—then, he begins to cut off the old habits, his old prides, his old joys. The beard on which the hoary Jew prided himself was to come off, and the eyebrows which seem to be necessary to make the countenance look decent, were all to be taken away! So it is with the pardoned man. He did *nothing* before; he does *everything* now. He knew that good works were of no benefit to him in his carnal state, but now he becomes so strict that he will shave off every hair of his old state! Not one darling lust shall be left; not one iniquity shall be spared; all must be cut away. "He shall wash his clothes also; he shall wash his flesh in water, and he shall be clean." There is one thing I want you to notice in the 8th verse, namely, that he was not allowed to go into his own tent. He might go in with the people, but he might not go into his "tent." Now, though the sinner has to trust in Christ just as he is, yet that sinner will not at once be able to go into his own tent, that is, he will never be able to

realize that Christ is personally his own until there has been something more than faith, namely, the cleansing purification of the Spirit's power. As to full assurance, I do not think that is to be attained by immediate faith in Christ— full assurance is an after-result. Faith grows by the influence of the Spirit till it comes to assurance; yet mark that for seven days the man might not go into his own house! He was clean and so if you, as a sinner full of sin, trust Christ to be your all, though no joy may follow for seven days, yet you are a pardoned man! Though you may not be able to go into your house and say, "I know I am forgiven," yet you are forgiven! The very hour when sin abounds is the hour when grace abounds. When sin has cut the throat of all your hopes, then Jesus Christ, the great hope and solace of His people, comes into your heart, and though you may scarcely be able to see Him, yet He is there, and you are a saved man! What a glorious salvation is this, and its after-results, how pure and how heavenly!

I will not detain you further than to notice that this man, before he might further enjoy the privileges of his healed estate, was to bring an offering, and the priest was to take him to the very door of the tabernacle. He never dare go there before, but he may come now. So the pardoned man may go right up to God's mercy seat, and may bring the offering of holiness and good works! He is a pardoned man now. You ask me how? Not by anything *he* did—but by what the *priest* did and that, alone. Read the 14th verse, "The priest shall take some of the blood of the trespass offering, and the priest shall put it upon the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed." Here the Lord puts away the sins of the ear, which are very many; the sins of the ear—when you used to hear lascivious songs, malignant words and idle talk. "He shall put it upon the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand." Have you read that? How many times has the right

hand sinned against God? How have your actions defiled you? “He shall put it upon the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand and upon the great toe of his right foot.” How have your feet run after wickedness? How greatly you need to be cleansed! But mark—when this blood had been put on, the priest did more—for he *anointed* him. Read the 17th verse—“and of the rest of the oil that is in his hand, shall the priest put upon the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot, upon the blood of the trespass offering.” This was telling him again very plainly that which he might have seen already in the type of the two birds. As soon as ever a man is pardoned, there elapses a time before he completely understands the plan of salvation; when he does, he perceives that he is first cleansed with blood—all his sins, of ear, of hand, of foot, or whatever they may be—are all put away by blood! But next, that he may become God’s servant, he is anointed by the influence of the Holy Spirit with the sanctifying oil; that oil is put on his ear, so that his ear hears his Master’s voice, and listens to the Word of God. That oil is put upon his hand that he may be a consecrated man to serve his God. That oil is put upon his foot that his feet may run in the way of God’s commands, even to the end. But, do mark, for I fear lest I should spoil that which I want to convey—all this was an after-piece, *after* the leper was cleansed! He could not have done any of this himself until the first part had been done for him!

To sum up the whole sermon in one or two short sentences: sinner, if you are this day unrenewed and unregenerate, you are loathsome to yourself; you are incapable of fellowship with God; you are preparing yourself for the pit of hell. But the way of salvation is simply this—if you are today full of sin, laden with iniquity; if you are ready to confess there is no good

thing in you; if you are willing to take the place of a prisoner who has been tried, condemned, and cast, then, Christ has died for you! Christ has shed His blood; Christ has risen up on high, and your salvation is finished. Say not in your heart, “I do not *feel this*; I do not *feel that*.” It is not your feeling or doing; it is what Christ has done. He must do all for you, and all He asks of you is simply to stand in the place of the unjust, that He may come to you in the place of the just, while He stands in your place. Is this too easy for you? Are you too proud to be saved by such a system as this? Then, what can I say to you, but that you deserve to die if you neglect a plan of salvation so simple and so admirably adapted to your case? But instead thereof, if you say, “That suits me, for I have nothing to trust to, I am lost.” Why, man, do you not see that inasmuch as it suits you, it is yours? For whom was the wedding garment made—for those who had fine robes of their own? No—for the naked! For whom was the bath open? For the clean? No—for the filthy! Step in filthy man, your filth is your warrant! For whom is medicine provided? For the healthy? No, it would be an insult. For the sick! Your sickness is your warrant—come to mercy’s hospital and be healed! Whom do you think Christ came to carry on His shoulders to heaven? Those who can walk there themselves? No, let them trudge their weary way; if they think they can go to heaven with their good works, let them do so. One of two things—either you must be saved without deserving to be saved—saved by the works of another— or else you must keep the whole law, and so inherit heaven of your own right and patent! If, then, you are willing to come to Christ just as you are without any preparation; simply as a *sinner*—then Christ has made atonement for you. Your guilt is put away—God accepts you—you are a pardoned man! You may go out at yonder door and say in your heart, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus

Christ. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we now have received the atonement.”

As for holiness and good works, these shall come afterwards! Having believed in Christ, His Spirit shall be given, and you shall be *zealous* for good works. While the legalist is *talking* about them, you shall *do* them! What you could not do before, you shall do now! When you have given up all trust in yourself, you shall become holy and pure, and the Spirit of God shall enter into you and shall renew you. You shall be kept by the power of God till, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing you shall be presented before your Father’s face saved—eternally saved! God add His blessing! I have sought to preach to you the gospel as plainly as possible. I may still have been misunderstood. If so, I trust that it is not my fault. I have repeated myself over and over again that the sinner, near despairing, may now come and put his trust in Christ, and find life in Jesus’ death, and healing in His wounds!

**354 A SERMON FOR THE WEEK OF PRAYER –
COL. 4:2**

**A Sermon
Delivered on Sabbath Morning, January 6th, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At Exeter Hall, Strand**

**“Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with
thanksgiving.” — Colossians 4:2**

THOSE OF YOU who constantly listen to my voice are aware that on the first Sabbath of the year I always receive of a venerable Clergyman—a veteran warrior in the Lord’s hosts—a verse of Scripture which I accept as my New Year’s text, and which after being printed becomes the motto of my congregation for the following year. It is somewhat amazing that my venerable friend should have sent me in the envelope about a month ago this text. He knew nothing of the proposition for a week of prayer. I do not know that it had been even determined upon at that date—certainly neither to his knowledge nor to mine—and I could not but help thinking when I opened my envelope, and saw what was to be my text, that he had been directly and specially guided of God, that my text might be in keeping with the engagements of the week. “Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.” How greatly do I rejoice that the Churches are awakened to prayer. My honored and venerable brother will this morning stand up in his village Church, lift up holy hands, and bid his

people join in the common supplication, and I feel but too happy as his younger brother in Christ—as but a babe compared to so experienced a pastor—to follow his example in stirring you up that you too, as a great host, may join with the general company of the faithful and besiege the throne of grace till you carry the gates of heaven by storm, and obtain the mercy which both you and the world so much require!

Without further preface, let me observe that there are three exhortations in the text connected with prayer. The first is *continue*; the second is *watch*; and the third is *give thanks*. “Continuance” sits like Moses on the top of the hill, while Watching and Thanksgiving, like Aaron and Hur, hold up its hands.

I. And first, in regard to prayer, the apostle says, “**CONTINUE.**”

Be you not, O you intercessors with God for men—be you not as those whose goodness is as the morning cloud and as the early dew. Do not begin to pray, and then suddenly cease your supplications. That will prove ignorance as to the value of the mercy which you seek, and a lack of earnestness as to your obtaining it. How many there are who, under a powerful sermon, or during a trying providence, have bent their knees suddenly in hasty prayer! They have risen from their knees, and they have forgotten what manner of men they were. Take away the whip from them, and they have ceased to run; remove from them the tempest, and they have ceased to fly before it; they have ceased to pray when God has ceased to smite! O Church of God, imitate not these heathen men and publicans! Wake not yourself up to a sudden fit of prayer, and then return again to your sloth; stir not yourself a moment from your bed to throw your heavy head back again upon your pillow, but continue in supplication—cease not to pray!

There is a great distinction between the prayer of the real convert and the merely convicted sinner. The merely convicted sinner, terrified by the Law, calls but once; the awakened heart, renewed of the Holy Spirit, never ceases to cry until the mercy comes! A few days ago, by the seaside, on the coast of the Isle of Wight, a woman thought she heard, in the midst of the howling tempest, the voice of a man. She listened. It was repeated. She strained her ears again, and she caught, amid the crack of the blast, and the thundering of the winds, another cry for help. She ran at once to the lifeguards who launched their boat, and some three poor mariners who were clinging to a mast were saved! Had that cry been but once and not again, either she might have doubted as to whether she had heard it at all, or else she would have drawn the melancholy conclusion that they had been swept into the watery waste, and that help would have come too late. So when a man prays but once, either we may think that he cries not at all, or else that his desires are swallowed up in the wild waste of his sins, and he himself is sucked down into the vortex of destruction. If the Church of God shall offer prayer this week, and then shall cease to be in earnest, we shall think her never to have meant her prayers! If she shall but now and then start up, and make her supplications, we shall write her down as a hypocrite intent for a moment upon keeping appearances, but afterwards relapsing into her lukewarm Laodicean condition! The exhortation of my text, I think, stands in contrast, then, to the transient prayer which is often offered by ungodly men. *Continue* in prayer; do not pray once, and have done with it, but *continue* in it.

I think further, that the exhortation to continue may be put in opposition to the common dealings of many with God, who pray and pause, and pray and pause—are earnest and then cool, earnest and colder still. There is a sharp frost—a rapid thaw, and then a frost again. Their spiritual state is as variable as our

own weather. A shower, sunshine, mist, shower, sunshine again! They are everything by turns and nothing long. There are too many Churches which are just of this character. See them one week, you would believe they would carry all before them, and convert the town or village in which they are located; see them next week and they are, “As sound asleep as a church,” which is a common proverb, a church being too often the sleepest thing in all the world! Sometimes they ran and they did run well—what did hinder them? But they stopped, they paused, they looked about them, and after a while they ran again— but they moved not swiftly enough to be able to make up the time lost when they were standing still!

Now, I am afraid our Churches have for a considerable period been just in this state—have been sometimes hot, and sometimes cold. Look at our revivals everywhere—the American revival, it is a great wave and then dry sand. Look at the Irish revival. I fear that in the end, it will come to the same amount. Almost everywhere there have been great stirrings, as if a holy fire had fallen, and was about to burn up all the stubble—all men stand in wonder at it, but it ceases and a few ashes remain! The fact is, the Church is not healthy; she has intermittent fits of health, she has starts of energy, she has paroxysms of agony; but she does not agonize for *souls*—she is not always earnest, she is not always busy. Well did Paul need to say to this age as to his own, “*Continue* in prayer.” Not one week, but every week! Not for a season, but at all seasons! Be you always crying out unto the Lord your God!

In the black country of England, you who have traveled will have observed fires which never in your recollection have been quenched. I believe there are some which have been kept burning for more than 50 years, both night and day, every day in the year. They are never allowed to go out, because, we are informed, the manufacturers would find it amazingly expensive

again to get the furnace to its needed red heat. Indeed, the blast furnace, I suppose would all but ruin the proprietor if it were allowed to go out once every week. He would probably never get it up to its right heat until the time came for letting the fire out again. Now, as with these tremendous furnaces which must burn every day or else they will be useless—they must be kept burning or else it will be hard to get them up to the proper heat—so ought it to be in all the Churches of God! They should be as flaming fires both night and day; caldron after caldron of the coal of earnestness should be put to the furnace, all the fuel of earnestness which can be gathered from the hearts of men should be cast upon the burning pile. The heavens should be always red with the glorious illumination, and then, then you might expect to see the Church prospering in her divine business, and hard hearts melted before the fire of the Spirit!

Continue, then, in prayer. Never let your fire go out. Why? Why should the Church always be in prayer? Understand we do not mean by this that men ought to leave their business, forsake their shops, and neglect their household, to be always supplicating. There were some fanatics in the early Church who gave up everything that they might be always praying. We know what the apostle would have said to them, for did he not say, “If any man will not work, neither let him eat”? There are some lazy people who like praying better than working—let them learn that the Lord accepts not this at their hands! Did not the Master, even when He was on earth, after He had preached a sermon in Simon Peter’s boat—did He not as soon as ever He was done, say to Peter, “Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught”? He did this to show that work, hard work, the hardest of work is quite in keeping with the hearing and the preaching of the Word, and that no man has any right to forsake his calling to which God has appointed him in His

providence, under pretense of seeking the Lord. Never stain one duty with the blood of another. It is quite possible that you may continue in your labor, and yet continue in prayer. You may not always be in the exercise, but you may always be in the spirit of prayer! If there shall not always be iron in the furnace to melt, yet let there always be the fire to melt it. If not always shooting the arrow up to heaven, yet always keep the bow well stringed, so shall you always be archers, though not always shooting! So shall you always be men of prayer, though not always in the exercise of praying.

1. But why should the Church—to come to the question—why should the Church continue in prayer? For several reasons, and the first is, *God will answer her*. It is not possible that God should refuse to hear prayer; it is possible for Him to bid the sun stand still, and the moon to stay her monthly march; it is possible for Him to bid the waves freeze in the sea—possible for Him to quench the light of the stars in eternal darkness—but it is not possible for Him to refuse to hear prayer which is based upon His promise and offered in faith! He can reverse nature, but He cannot reverse His own nature, and He must do this before He can forbear to hear and answer prayer! The prayers of God's Church are God's intentions—you will not misunderstand me—what God writes in the book of His decree, which no eye can see, *that* He in process of time writes in the book of Christian hearts where all can see and read! The book of the believer's *desire*, if those desires are inspired of the Holy Spirit, is just an exact copy of the book of the divine decree. And if the Church is determined today to lift up her heart in prayer for the conversion of men, it is because God determined from before all worlds that men should be converted! Your feeble prayer today, brothers and sisters, can fly to heaven and awake the echoes of the slumbering decrees of God! Every time you speak to God, your voice resounds

beyond the limits of time. The decrees of God speak to your prayer and cry, “All hail, brother, all hail! You, too, are a decree!”

Prayer is a decree escaped out of the prison of obscurity, and come to life and liberty among men. Pray, brothers and sisters, pray, for when God inspires you, your prayer is as potent as the decrees of God! As His decrees bind the universe with spells, and make the suns obedient to Him—as every letter of His decree is as a nail, pinning together the pillars of the universe, so are your prayers; they are the pivots on which earth rests; they are the wheels on which providence revolves; your prayers are like God's decrees struggling to be born, and to become incarnate like their Lord.

God will, God *must* answer the prayers of His Church. I think I can see in vision in the clouds, God's register, and His file in which He puts the prayers of His Church. One after another they have been deposited; He has cast none of them away, and consumed none of them in the fire, but He has put them in His file and smiled as the heap accumulated; and when it shall reach a certain mark which He has set and appointed in His good pleasure, and the last number of the prayers shall be completed and the blood of Christ shall have bedewed the whole, then will the Eternal speak, and it *shall* be done—He shall command and it *shall* stand fast! “Let there be light,” He says, and there shall be light at once. “Let the kingdom come,” and the kingdom shall come; he who tarries shall be put out of the way, he who hinders shall be cast down, and trod as the mire of the streets. Up, Church of God, in all the glory of your prayer, put on your vestments, and begin to plead through Jesus Christ, your Great High Priest; enter within the veil today, for God hears you, and He will surely answer you!

2. There is a second reason why the Church should continue in prayer, namely, that by her prayers *the world will most certainly be blessed*. The other evening in visiting the sick, I saw at

a distance, down a long street, the bright light of a fire. In a moment or so the flames seemed to yield, but again it sprang up and lit the heavens! Again it became dim and still dimmer. As we walked along, we said, “They have got the fire under control; the engines have been at work; how soon it is out!” I compare this to the Church’s work upon the world. The world is, as it were, wrapped in flames of the fire of sin, and the Church of God must quench those flames. Whenever we meet together, and are more earnest in prayer, angels might well see in the distance the flames dimmed, and the fire giving way. Whenever we cease our exertions and become languid in our efforts, the flame gets the upper hand of us, and once more, spirits from the far-off world can see the fiery mantle surrounding our globe. Hand up your buckets, Sirs! Every man to the pumps! Now strip to it, everyone of you, work while you have life and strength! Now, each man to his knees, for it is on our knees that we overcome! Each man to his station and to his work, and let us continue to pass from hand to hand the quenching water till every spark shall be put out, and there shall be a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness! To stop while but one part of the fabric is on fire would be to condemn the whole! To pause until the last spark shall be extinct, would be to give up the world to the devouring element! Continue, then, in prayer, till the world is wholly saved, and Christ is universal King!

3. Thirdly, continue in prayer, because *souls shall be saved as the result of your entreaties*. Can you stand on the beach a moment—you can scarcely see, but yet you may discern by the lights of lanterns, some brave men launching the lifeboat. It is out—they have taken their seats; helmsman and rowers, all strong hearts, determined to save their fellows or to perish! They have gotten far away, now, into the midst of the billows, and we have lost sight of them. But in spirit we will take our

stand in the midst of the boat. What a sea rolled in just then! If she were not built for such weather, she would surely have been overturned. Look at that tremendous wave and how the boat leaps like a sea bird over its crest! See now again—it has plunged into a dreary furrow, and the wind, like some great plow, turns up the water on either side as though it were clods of mold! Surely the boat will find her grave and be buried in the sheet of foam—but no—she comes out of it and the dripping men draw a long breath! But the mariners are discouraged; they have strained themselves bending to yonder oars, and they would turn back, for there is small hope of living in such a sea, and it is hardly possible that they will ever reach the wreck. But the brave captain cries out, “Now, my bold lads, for God’s sake, send her on! A few more pulls of the oar, and we shall be alongside! The poor fellows will be able to hold on a minute or two longer; now pull as for dear life.” See how the boat leaps! See how she springs as though she were a living thing, a messenger of mercy intent to save! Again, the captain says “Once more, once again and we will do it”—no, she has been dashed aside from the ship for a moment, that sea all but stove her in, but the helmsman turns her around and the captain cries, “Now, my boys, once more!” And every man pulls with lusty sinews, and the poor shipwrecked ones are saved! Yes, it is just so with us right now! Long have Christ’s ministers, long has Christ’s Church pulled with the gospel lifeboat—let us pull again! Every prayer is a fresh stroke of the oar, and all of you are oarsmen! Yes, you feeble women confined to your beds, shut up in your chambers—you who can do nothing else but pray—you are all oarsmen in this great boat! Pull yet once more, and this week let us drive the boat ahead and it may be it will be the last tremendous struggle that shall be required, for sinners shall be saved, and the multitude of the redeemed shall

be accomplished! Not we, but *divine grace* shall do the work, yet is it ours to be workers for God!

4. But continue in prayer once more, because prayer is *a great weapon of attack against the error and wickedness of the world*. I see before me the strong bastions of the castle of Sin. I mark the host of men who have surrounded it. They have brought the battering ram, they have dashed it many times against the gate; it has fallen with tremendous force against it, and you would have supposed that the timbers would be split asunder the first time. But they are staunch and strong; he who made them was a cunning architect; he who depends upon them for his protection is one who knew how to make the gate exceedingly massive—is one who knew the struggle full well which he would have to endure—Prince of Darkness as he is! If he knew of his defeat, yet well he knew how to guard against it if it were possible. But I see this ponderous battering ram as it has been hurled with giant force again and again upon the gate, and has as often seemed to recoil before the massive bars. Many of the saints of God are ready to say, “Let us withdraw the instrument; let us take away the besieging armament; we shall never be able to storm this castle; we shall never effect an entrance.” Oh, be not cowards, sirs, be not cowards. The last time the battering ram thundered in its course, I saw the timbers shake! The very gate did reel and the posts did rock to and fro—see now, they have moved the earth around their sockets! Hell is howling from within because it knows how soon its end must come! Now, Christian warriors, use your battering rams once more, for the gates begin to shake and the walls are tottering. They will reel, they will fall before long—one more blow and yet another and another, and another, and as Israel went up over the walls of Jericho of old, so shall we soon go up over the fallen ruins of the walls of the castle of Sin and Satan! The Church does not know how near her victory

is—we do not believe how much God is doing—but let the Holy Spirit for once give us a little more faith, and in confidence that we are nearing the victory—we shall continue in prayer! Turn not back when we have all but overcome, continue still, even till the end shall be, and the voice shall be heard, “Hallelujah, it is done! The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.”

II. The second exhortation is WATCH.

Watch, *for you will soon be drowsy if you watch not.* Joshua fought the Amalekites, and I never read that his hands were weary, though the battle occupied a very long day. Moses was on the mountain in prayer, and his hands grew heavy because prayer is such spiritual work and we are so un-spiritual that the tendency of prayer upon our nature will be to make us drowsy unless we watch. It is ill-praying, when we are drowsy. It is ill for a Church that is not half-awake to be in supplication. All eyes must be opened! The judgment, the imagination, the hope, the memory—all must be in full vigor, or else we can scarcely hope that prayer shall be successful. I think I see the Church as I fear she is now. There she is upon her knees, with hands clasped. She mutters a few words. Her head droops, for she is weary. Again she pleads, and yet again, her head is well nigh fallen on her bosom—she is a sleeping Church in prayer! Am I too severe in this picture? I believe it is true. I think there are some members of the Church thoroughly awake, but they are few. There are multitudes of professors who do not feel the value of souls. There are many who will meet in the room of this lower hall and meet in our own chapels, also, to pray who are nevertheless not awake, not awake to the world's necessities, not awake to Christ's glory, not awake to the power of the gospel—nor awake to their own responsibilities, so that they will pray—but pray and sleep! Here, then, we see the value of

the exhortation of the apostle—“Continue in prayer and *watch in the same.*”

But watch for another reason—because *as soon as ever you begin to pray, there will be enemies who will commence the attack.* The Church never was earnest, yet, without sooner or later discovering that the devil was in earnest, too. The devil has had an easy time of it up till the last six or seven years, for the Church has been going on her old-fashioned way doing nothing at all! There was very little abuse of ministers—ministers were getting to be very respectable men, and very little abuse of any section of Christians—they were all getting to be very easy and loveable sort of people. But as sure as the Church, or any section of the Church, shall be in earnest, they will be abused! Never think you are good for anything till the world finds fault with you; never reckon that you have got a success unless many begin to cry you down! I always think that an article against you, if you have sought with an honest conscience to discharge your duty in the sight of God, is one of the highest compliments the press can pay you. Consider it as such! Never expect that the world will be friends with the Church. Indeed the world will be friendly enough with the Church if the Church will not do her duty. If there were a sentinel set to guard a post against surprise; if you knew him to be a very great friend of those who meant to make the attack, I think you would suspect very soon that he was in collusion with the enemy. No, sirs, they who fight Christ’s battles, must be men who think as well of the world as the world thinks of them—that is to say, who have *no love to the world’s esteem* and the world no love to them! Martin Luther used to say, “The world gives me a very bad character, but there is no love lost between us; I can give to it as bad a character as ever it gives to me.” The world says, “Quack, pretender, fanatic!” Be it so—be it so, O world— you have no power to honor Christ’s ministers,

except by upbraiding them. There is no power in the wicked to honor Christ's minister, except they are either trembling before him, or else laughing at him. Either way, we will gratefully accept the honor and write it down as being a proof of our success.

But watch, O Church of Christ, watch; a struggle awaits you as sure as ever you are earnest in prayer. In riding along the south coast of England, you may have noticed the old Martello towers in constant succession very near to each other. They are the result of an old scheme of protecting our coast from our ancient enemies. It was supposed that as soon as ever a French ship was seen in the distance, the beacon would be fired at the Martello tower and then, across old England, wherever her sons dwelt, there would flash the fiery signal news that the enemy was at hand, and every man would seize the weapon that was next to him to dash the invader from the shore. Now, we need that the Church of Christ should be guarded with Martello towers of sacred watchers, who shall day and night look out for the attack of the enemy. For the enemy will come. If he comes not when we are prayerless, he will surely come when we are prayerful! He will show the cloven hoof as soon as ever we show the bended knee! If our motto is "Prayer," his watchword will be "Fierce attack." Watch, then, while you continue in prayer.

But yet again—watch while you pray *for propitious events which may help you in the answer to your prayer*. I have known sea captains, when they have got their ships loaded with coal, and they have wished to come up to London with their cargo, have been unable to get down the Tyne and out to sea. If they could have got to sea, they could make their passage. And I have once or twice known a wary captain, being well upon the watch, manage to sail out of the river just while there was a little change of the wind; and when his fellows have awakened in the

morning, they have missed him from his berth, and he has stolen a march upon them. He watched and they did not, and having lost the wind, they have had to lie in port till he has emptied out his cargo and returned! Now, the Church should watch while she prays to see if she cannot fulfill her own prayers, look out for opportunities of doing good, and see if she cannot steal a march upon her enemies. While she has one eye to heaven for help, she must have the other eye on earth to look out for opportunities of doing good! God does not always send the Spirit to blow with the same force. We cannot make the wind blow, but we can spread the sails. So, if we cannot command the Spirit of God, when the Spirit of God does come, we can observe His coming and avail ourselves of the glorious opportunity! Watch, then, while you pray.

Watch, too, *for fresh arguments in prayer*. Heaven's gate is not to be stormed by one weapon but by many. Spare no arrows, Christian. Watch and see that none of the arms in your armory are rusty. Besiege the throne of God with a hundred hands, and look at the promise with a hundred eyes. You have a great work on hand, for you have to move the arm that moves the world! Watch, then, for every means of moving that arm. See to it that you ply every promise; that you use every argument; that you wrestle with all your might! When you are wrestling with an antagonist, you must keep your eyes on him; you must look to see what he means to do next, or where you can get the next grip at him; see where you can get a hold, or plant your foot, so that you can throw him down. So wrestle with the Angel of Mercy! Watch while you pray. You cannot wrestle with your eyes shut, nor can you prevail with God unless your own soul is in a watchful state. O Spirit of God, awaken the Church and help her to watch while she prays!

But one other remark: *watch for the answers to your prayers*. When you post a letter to a friend, requesting a favor, you

watch for an answer. When you pray to God for a favor, you do not expect Him to hear you, some of you. If the Lord were to hear some of your prayers, you would be surprised! I do believe that if God should send to you what you have asked for, you would be quite astonished! Sometimes when I have met with a special answer to prayer, and have told it, some have said—“Is it not amazing!” Not at all, it would be amazing if it were *not* so! God says—“Ask and you shall receive.” If I should ask and *not* receive, it would be amazing. “Seek and you shall find.” If you seek and do not find, it is not only amazing, but I think it is contradictory to God’s Word! The Church has but to ask, and she shall receive. She has but to knock, and the door of mercy shall be opened. But we do not believe this! We fritter away God’s promises and clip the edge of them, and then we go to God in prayer and we think that prayer is a very holy exercise—but we do not think that God really hears us! Too many professors believe it is their duty to pray, but really they are not so enthusiastic as to think that God actually listens and sends them what they ask for! A man, who should say that he knew that God heard his prayers, is in some quarters looked upon as an enthusiast. And what is that but a proof that we do not believe this precious Book? For let the most unprejudiced man be a judge, if this Book does not teach that, “Whatever we ask in prayer, believing we shall receive,” then it does not teach anything at all. And if it is not true that prayer is a power which prevails with God, then shut this Book; it is not worthy of any confidence, for it does plainly say that which you say it does not mean! The fact is, my brothers and sisters, the answers to our prayers are always on the way while we are asking! Sometimes they come while we are yet speaking! Sometimes they delay because we have not prayed as we should; God keeps the mercy back at times, and puts it out at compound interest because He means to pay it to us, interest and all—whereas if

we had it at once, we would miss the interest, which sometimes doubles and trebles the principal! We are never losers by His delays, but always gainers! We ought never to say, even though providence should tell us so, that God forgets or is unmindful—we never ought to believe that God has been deaf to our cries, or refused to answer our petitions. A true believer pleading Christ's name and sacrifice, and asking in faith, must and shall receive that which he asks of God!

Now, during the next week, the Churches will meet together to ask for God's blessing, and if that blessing were to come, we should read the *Missionary Herald* and it would begin, "There has been a most surprising awakening throughout all the Churches in such-and-such a country!" That word, "surprising," ought to be struck out! We should say, "God has been as good as His Word; we asked Him to bless the world, and He has done it! And if He does not do it, it will be because we have not asked aright, for as sure as ever we had asked aright, God would have heard us." I believe this to be as true as a mathematical proposition! If twice two is four, then it is just as true that God hears prayer! I would not look upon it as being a mere notion, a thought, a very fine imagining, or a pretty idea—it is a fact, Sirs—it is a fact! It is a fact which I could prove in my own experience by a hundred instances if this were the time and place to tell them. But I am sure that the people of God universally could prove that God does hear prayer. As certainly as ever when you write to a friend you get your answer—still more surely and certainly if you are pleading the name of Christ, God will hear you! But oh, open your eyes and look for the blessing! Watch for it! Be not so simple as to sow the seed and never look for the harvest. Do not be planting and never looking for fruit. Give up your prayers, or else expect them to be successful. When we were little children, we had a little plot of ground for a garden, and we put our seeds into it. I well

recollect how the day after I had put in my seed, I went and scraped the soil away to see if it was not growing, as I expected it would have been after a day or so at the very longest, and I thought the time amazingly long before the seed would be able to make its appearance above the ground. “That is childish,” you would say. I know it is, but I wish you were childish, too, with regard to your prayers—that you would—when you have put them in the ground, go and see if they have sprung up! And if not at once—be childish in refusing to wait till the appointed time comes—always go back and see if they have begun to sprout. If you believe in prayer at all, expect God to hear you! If you do not expect, you will not have it. God will not hear you unless you believe He will hear you! But if you believe He will, He will be as good as your faith. He will never allow you to think better of Him than He is; He will come up to the mark of your thoughts, and according to your faith, so shall it be done unto you.

III. I have a third point, but my time is almost gone, therefore let me dwell on it very briefly. The third point is, **GIVE THANKS.**

Prayer should be mingled with praise. I have heard that in New England after the Puritans had settled there a long while, they used to have very often a day of humiliation, fasting and prayer, till they had so many days of fasting, humiliation and prayer, at last a good senator proposed that they should change it for once, and have a day of thanksgiving. It is of little use to be always fasting. We ought sometimes to give thanks for mercies received. Now, during this week, there are to be days of prayer. Take care that they are days of praise, too! Why should we go to God as mournful beings, who plead piteously with a hard Master who loves not to give? When you give a penny to a beggar in the street, you like to see him smile at you—do you not? Is he a crossing-sweeper and you have given

him a trifle? He looks extremely grateful and happy and you think within yourself, “What a small expense has made that man happy! I think I will buy another pennyworth of joy the next time I pass by.” So you give him all the more because of his thankfulness to you. Now, go not before God with a rueful face, you people of God, as though He had never heard you before, and you were about to try a great experiment on One who was exceedingly deaf, and did not like to give you mercies! God is as pleased to give you His blessing as ever you are to receive it; it is as much to *His* honor as it is to *your* comfort; He takes more pleasure in your prayers than you do in His answers! Come therefore, boldly. Come with thankfulness in your heart and upon your lips, and join the hymn of praise with the cry of prayer. Be thankful for what God has done. Look at the past year. I commend it to your consideration when you meet for prayer. Has there been for the last 20 years such a year as the last? If any man had said seven years ago there would be preaching in St. Paul’s Cathedral and Westminster Abbey, we should never have believed him! But it is has been, and it is to be again! If any friends had said that nearly all the theatres in London would be filled on the Sabbath, “Oh,” you would have said, “it is ridiculous, it is an absurd notion!” But it is done, Sirs; it is done.

If any had said to you seven years ago there would have been a congregation of many thousands who, without any drawback in numbers, would always assemble every Sabbath to listen to one minister, you would have said, “Ridiculous! There is no precedent for it. It is impossible! It is not at all possible that the Spirit of God can incline a people’s heart so long to listen to *one man*.” It is done, sirs; by God’s grace it is done! And what are we to do but to give God thanks for it? When we come before Him to ask Him for fresh mercies, let us not be so foolish as to forget the past. “Sing unto Him, sing unto Him,

sing psalms unto Him! Come into His presence with thanksgivings, and show yourself glad in Him with psalms—for the Lord is God, and a great King above all gods.” So thank Him for the past, and pray to Him for the future. Thank Him, too, for the power to pray; thank Him for the privilege of taking the Church’s needs before Him. And do still better—thank Him for the mercy which *is to come*. Great God, I thank You for Sinim, the land of China, which shall come unto You! I praise You for India, which shall receive You! I praise You for Ethiopia, which shall stretch out her arms unto You! Great God, today we bless You for what You *will* do; Your promise is, in the estimation of our faith, as good as the performance itself! We extol and glorify You, for Your right hand, O Lord! Your right hand, O Lord, has dashed in pieces the enemy. You have broken the bow and cut the spear in sunder. You have burned the chariot in the fire. Your right hand, O Lord, has gotten You the victory! Oh come, let us sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! Let us laud and extol Him, for He is King forever and ever! Say unto Zion, “Your God reigns.” Behold, He comes. He comes to judge the world in righteousness, and the people with equity. Rejoice before Him, O you hills, clap your hands, O you cedars! Let the sea roar and the fullness thereof; the world and all that dwell therein! Praise Him, you heavens; and you heaven of heavens; you spirits that stand before His throne, for He is God and beside Him there is no God. The whole earth praises You, O God, and all Your creatures bless You forever and ever!

Thus, with the censor of prayer and praise, let us be this week like priests of God; and You, great High Priest, take our sacrifice, and offer it before Your Father’s face!

I close my sermon. O that some here present may lay the subject of prayer to heart this week! Get alone, dear friends, get alone this week! Pray for your children this week, and groan

with God over your ungodly sons and daughters! Pray for your neighbors this week! Put God to the test! See if He does not open the windows of heaven upon you. Be much in prayer and you shall be much blessed. And O poor sinner! You who have never prayed before—the year of God’s redeemed is come! This is the acceptable day of the Lord; if you seek Him, He will be found of you. “Seek you the Lord while He may be found. Call you upon Him while He is near.” Cry to Him now! Say—

“O sovereign grace, my heart subdue!”

Trust Jesus with your soul, and unworthy though you are, your prayer shall be heard, and you shall be able to join with the company of the faithful in praying for others as well as for yourself. God bless you all, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

355 PORTRAITS OF CHRIST – ROM. 8:29

A Sermon
Delivered on Sabbath Morning, January 13th, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At Exeter Hall, Strand

“For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son.” — Romans 8:29

IT IS NOT so much predestination which will occupy our attention this morning, as the fact that believers are predestinated *to be conformed to the image of God's dear Son*.

Perhaps nothing in the world is a surer sign of littleness than a slavish imitation of any man. Men lose that which is an *honor* to them—individuality—and then, they lose that which is a *power* to them—originality—the moment they commence walking in another man's shoes. When one painter slavishly copies another, he is only known as the satellite of the greater luminary; he himself is neither respectable nor respected. But this is not the case when men select models which are confessed to be perfect. You never hear a man accused of a lack of originality because he studies the models in sculpture of Ancient Greece. It is not usual to hear the accusation of imitation brought against painters who have studiously examined the works of Michelangelo or of Raphael. These men are put at the head of their respective schools and the following of these masters of the art is voted to be no folly, but true wisdom. 'Tis even so with the imitation of Christ. To imitate other men is weakness; to copy Christ is strength. Christ is the

perfect type of manhood. He who should imitate Him the most nearly, would be the most original man upon earth! It may seem a paradox, but it is one which, nevertheless, needs only to be tried to be proved; no man will be looked upon as so strange, so singular a being among his fellows, as the man who shall nearest approach to the image of the Lord Jesus! He *imitates*, we grant you; he *copies*, we confess it; but he is himself, despite his copying, an original to other men, and he stands out from the common herd as being a distinguished and celebrated individual—he will be “known and read of all men.” If I should stand here this morning, my hearers, to exhort you to imitate any one model in manhood *except* Christ, I would feel that I had a difficult task with sensible men. There is not in all the annals of our race, a single name which I could bid you love and reverence as much as to shut your eyes to the faults connected therewith. There is not a single biography truthfully written which I would have you read, and then say, “I will re-live this man’s life precisely as he lived it.” You would make shipwreck if you should blindly steer in the wake of the noblest of your brethren! You may take a virtue here, and a virtue there, and then, in God’s strength, seek to imitate those men who excelled in those points—but to imitate an Abraham in all things, would not make you an Abraham—nor would it make you what you should be. To seek to follow a Job in all respects would not bring you to be perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect. There remains but one model we can ever commend to you, and only one which a man of strong mind can accept as his copy in every jot and tittle. That I shall endeavor to present to you this morning, while I preach the great doctrine that all believers are predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ Jesus.

In what sense? Why? And is it possible? Three points, each interesting.

I. IN WHAT SENSE IS A BELIEVER TO BE CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF CHRIST?

There are some views which would be taken of this subject, which I think would be shallow and would not reach the full meaning of the Word of God. Some men conceive that they are to bear the image of Christ to warrant them as being His followers, although their works tell another tale! They are to be called Christians, and then, under the garb and cover of Christianity, they are to make their vices appear like virtues, and their crimes are to be dignified as though they were of the highest morality. Now, a Christian is not to bear the image of Christ as a penny bears the superscription of the Queen! That image is put there to make the coin current among men, but a penny is not the image of the Queen, it is only stamped with it. There are some Christians who think that they have the seal of the Spirit upon them, the stamp of Christ's warranty, and that they can claim to be accepted as Christians because they imagine they have the seal of the Spirit and the stamp of Christ's warranty upon them. Now, as the penny is not conformed after all to the image of the person whose face it bears, so such a man is not, by any pretended warranty he thinks he has, really conformed to the image of Christ. There is something more required of us, and something more will be bestowed upon us by the Spirit, than having in some dark corner the name of Jesus tattooed into the skin of our profession.

Nor, again—neither have they attained to conformity to the image of Christ who are content with a cold morality. You have seen a statue so exceedingly well chiseled that it is the very image of the statesman or the warrior whom it represents. You might dream that it looked from those stony eyes; you might imagine that it would step from its pedestal. Is it not put in the attitude of one who is about to lead the troops to battle? Could

you not conceive it crying, “On, comrades, on”; but it stands there stiff and stolid, and its lips move not; it is dumb, and blind, and motionless. I know some whose imitation of Christ is as if it were cut in marble—there is no life in it! Now, this is not the conformity to Christ’s image which the Spirit will give to us. We are not to be mere pictures of Christ, dead and lifeless; but the very lifeblood of Christ is to run in our veins. Our activity and our energy is to be consecrated and Christ-like. We are to be like He as living men. Not as cold frozen things or mummies swathed in the bandages of the law of God—but as living freemen, we are to be conformed to the image of Christ Jesus!

Some there are, too, who imagine that to be conformed to the image of Christ Jesus, it will be quite enough to act publicly as Christ would have acted. They are always talking about points of conscience— “Would Christ have done this,” or “that?” And then, they answer it according to their own fancies! They see some Christian who walks under “the perfect law of liberty,” and is not bound by the “touch not, taste not, handle not,” of the old Mosaic spirit, and they cry over him, “Would Christ have done such a thing?” They see a believer laugh, “Would Christ have done it?” If a Christian keeps a carriage, “Ah,” they say, “Did Christ ever ride in a carriage?” And so, they think that by putting on a face that is more marred than that of any other man, they shall become the very image of Christ Jesus. You know that in the theatres men come forth as kings, “and strut their little hour.” And for a while, they are the very image of Julius Caesar, or of Richard III—and do you suppose that such is the intention of the Holy Spirit— that you and I should be so dressed that in outward appearance we should be the image of Christ, and yet not be like Christ really and truly? God forbid we should indulge so idle a dream! The fact is, brothers and sisters, while practically we must be like the Savior, yet the greatest conformity to His image must be

within. It must be that unseen spirit, that essential holiness which dwells where only God can see it which shall constitute the main part of our likeness to Christ. Tomorrow you might put on a garment without seam, woven from the top throughout; you might put sandals on the soles of your feet; you might wear your beard uncut and so say, “In all this I seek to be like Christ.” And you might even ride through the streets of Jerusalem upon “a colt, the foal of an ass,” but you would be a great deal more the image of a fool, than you would be the image of Christ! This imitation is not to be in mere externals—it is to be in *internals*—in the very essence and spirit of your Christian character.

1. In what, then, is this conformity to be found? I reply, in three things. First, the believer is to be conformed to the image of Christ *in character*. Now, when we think of Christ, what thoughts arise at once? We think, in the first place, of a *humble* one, of one who, “though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor.” We think of a man who was meek and lowly in heart, who took no lordship over the sons of men, but was a servant of servants, and washed His disciples’ feet. If we would be like Christ, we must be humble; we must cast aside that self-conceit which is interwoven into our nature; we must strive against that pride, which is, alas, too natural to us all. When we think of Christ, we always bring up before our minds the idea of one who was diligent in His Father’s business. We see before us not an idle sluggard, not one who sought His own rest, who slept upon the oar that He ought to tug, or reclined upon the sword with which He should fight. We find Him one who went about doing good, who knew no rest except that wondrous rest which His holy toil afforded to His spirit. “I have meat to eat,” He said, “that you know not of.” Now, if we would be like Christ, we must conquer our constitutional sloth; we must spurn all the softness of ease; we must be good soldiers and

bear hardness. We must spend and be spent if we would bear His image. When we think of Christ, again, we see one who was full of *love*—not that love which cants and whines, but the love which is true and honest, and which, for love’s sake, dares not flatter. We see a love which dwelt not in words, but in very deeds—a love which gave its whole self up to the objectives which it had chosen. If we would be like Christ, we must be pillars of love. We must not be so loving that we yield up everything that is masculine in our nature; our love must be that faithful love which, in faithfulness, gives wounds even to a friend. And yet, must it be so deep, so true, that we would prefer to be sacrificed and to be offered up in the most painful manner rather than the objects of our affection should be made to suffer. Oh, we have never come to be like Christ till love is legible upon our very face; till we have got rid of our crabbed and stern visage; till we have had cast out of us that seven-fold devil of intolerance and bigotry! We have never come to be like Christ till we have arms that would embrace a world; we have never come to be like He till we have a heart on which the name of the Church is written, and a breast which bears the names of all the redeemed as the High Priest bore the breastplate before the mercy seat.

But yet, further—I think we always associate with the name of Christ not simply humility and service, and love, but *devotion* and *prayerfulness*. We know that when He had ceased to preach, He began to pray. When He had left the mountain side which had been His pulpit, He went to another mountain which became His silent oratory. The disciples might sleep, but not the Master; they might sleep for sorrow, but He sweats great drops of blood for agony—

“Cold mountains and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervor of His prayer.”

We can never be like the Master till not only in public, but in private we are God's own—never till we know the power of knee-work—till we know how to struggle with strong crying and tears; never till we could almost shed great drops of blood when we are pleading for the souls of men; never till our heart is ready to burst with a sacred agony when we are wrestling with God—never till then shall we be conformed to the image of God's dear Son! Ah, my brothers and sisters, I feel, in trying to describe what that image is, like one who handles the brush with a shaking, palsied hand—although he has the outlines of the most beauteous form sketched upon the canvas. Lo! I have daubed where I ought to have been skillful. I have but sought to paint one feature, but who among us can describe the whole? We can but gather up all thoughts and say, one man is admirable for his faith, another for his patience; one is distinguished for his courage, and another for his affection; but Christ is *altogether lovely*! Christ is not a mixture of many beauties, but He is *all* beauty put together—

“Nature, to make His beauties known,
Must mingle colors not her own.”

We must exhaust all the eulogies which were ever poured upon the heads of the excellent; we must drain dry all the earnest strains of the enthusiastic songs that were ever cast at the feet of the heroes of this world—and when we have done all this—we have not begun to sing the praises which are due to our beloved, our perfect exemplar, and covenant head! In moral virtues, then, the Christian is to be conformed to Christ.

2. But further, there is one thing which is so linked to Christ that you cannot think of Him without it and that is, *His cross*. You do not see all of Christ till you see His cross. By four nails was He fastened to it; by more than four sure thoughts is

He always linked in the minds of His people with His agony and His death. If we are ever conformed to Christ, we must bear His cross. Do you see Him, Christian? He is despised, and rejected of men. Do you see Him passing through the midst of a crowd that is yelling and hooting at Him? Men whom He had blessed are cursing Him! Lame men whom He had healed are using the power which He gave that they may run to scorn Him! Lips that had been dumb if He had not given them speech, are venting blasphemies upon Him and He, the lovely, the forsaken of all, goes outside the camp bearing His reproach. Do you see Him, believer? The world counts Him to be the offscouring of all things. It cries, “Away with Him, away with Him! It is not fit that He should live.” It awards Him a slave’s death—He must not only die, but die as a menial dies. He must not simply so die, but die *outside the camp*, as a thing accursed and unclean! See there an image of yourself, if you are ever conformed to His likeness. You must bear the cross of suffering; you must bear the shame and spitting of ungodly men; you, too, must become in your measure the song of the drunkard; you must go outside the camp—even His professed followers—you must be crucified to the flesh, and its affections and lusts! You must be dead to the world, and the world must be dead to you, or else you will never completely bear the image of Christ.

And while I talk on this subject, I am smitten with grief, for, indeed, if I wanted a living illustration of this, must I not rather find it in contrast than in comparison? O, what multitudes of professors we have who have found out a new way to shun the cross! We have ministers who could preach all the year round, and no man would ever find fault with them! We have some who can prophecy such smooth things, that none of their hearers gnash their teeth in anger against them! We have Christian merchants who find it not at all impossible

to keep their profession, and yet to be dishonest in their trade! We find men who are first and foremost in all manner of worldliness; they are the world's men, and yet they are Christ's men too, *they say*. Where they shall stand in that day when the secrets of all hearts shall be known, I will not say, but I leave that text to declare it in which it is written, "The love of this world is enmity against God." If any man professes to be a Christian, let him count the cost, first, if he means to be a thorough Christian, and let him put down among the first items, *loss of reputation!* And if he means to be decisive in his convictions, let him put down, *loss of many friends*, and let him think it no strange thing when the fiery trial shall come upon him! God grant you, my brothers and sisters, that you may have fellowship with Christ in His sufferings, and that in the bearing of the cross, you may be conformed to His image.

Once more only upon this first point; today we think of Christ not merely as the bearer of the cross, but as the wearer of the crown—

"The head that once was crowned with thorns,
Is crowned with glory now;
A royal diadem adorns
The mighty Victor's brow!
No more the bloody spear,
The cross and nails no more,
For hell itself shakes at His name,
And all the heavens adore."

And—blessed thought!—the believer is to be conformed to the image of the Crowned One as well as of the Crucified One! If we are cross-bearers, we shall be crown-wearers! If the hands shall feel the nail, they shall grasp the palm! If the feet shall be tightly fastened to the wood, they shall one day be girt

with the sandals of immortal bliss! Fear not, believer! It is necessary that you should first bear the image of the Sorrowful, that you should afterwards bear the image of the glorious. Christ Himself came not to His crown except by His cross; He descended that He might ascend; He stooped to conquer; He went into the grave, that He might rise above all principalities and powers; as the man-Mediator, He earned His dignity by His sufferings and you, too, must fight if you would reign! You, too, must endure if you would win; you must run the race if you would obtain the reward. O then, let your hearts be cheered! As you have borne “the image of the earthy,” you shall also bear “the image of the heavenly.” You shall be like He is when you shall see Him as He is. You shall be perfect, blessed, honored, magnified and glorified in Him! Does He sit at the right hand of God, even the Father? You, too, shall sit at His right hand! Does the Father say to Him, “Well done,” and look on Him with inexpressible delight? He shall say, “Well done, good and faithful servant,” even to *you*, and you shall enter into the joy of your Lord! Is He without a pain, without a fear? Is He without anything to mar the splendor of His magnificence? So shall *you* be! You are as He was in this world—you shall be in the world to come just what He is there! Come, cross! I bend my willing shoulders to you, if I may afterward bow my head to receive that crown! Come, earth! Lay your heaviest cross upon me! Come, you adversaries of the truth! Bring your hammer and your nails; come, you chief enemies; bring your sharpest spears! My soul shall bare her breast, and hold out hands and feet to receive the marks of the Lord Jesus, that in these she may afterwards arise to claim the crown, to claim the image of the glorious, because she has borne the image of the despised!

Now all this, I take it, is contained in my text. We are predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's Son in *character*, in *suffering*, and afterwards, in *glory*.

II. But, secondly, and though it is a very extensive subject, hurriedly—**WHY SHOULD WE BEAR THE IMAGE OF THE HEAVENLY?** Why should we be transformed as unto the image of Christ?

Very many answers spring up and each one of them claims the preference. But to begin, well may we desire to bear the image of Christ because *it was that which we lost in Eden*. We look back to Paradise with many a sigh, but well the *spiritual mind* sighs not for the spice groves, nor for the verdant walks, nor for the trees luxuriant with fruit. If Eden had been a Sahara, a howling desert, the truly *spiritual mind* would still long to have it back again for only one reason—namely, that there man was in the image of his Maker. “Let us make man in our own image,” said God, “after our own likeness.” All the losses we sustained by Adam's ruin were very little compared with that great loss of the likeness and image of the immortal and immaculate Deity! Oh, if we had been spotless and undying, like the God whose image Adam bore, we might well have endured to have the earth sterile and barren; and all the pains and pangs which the curse brought upon us would have been light and trivial—if we had still retained the image of our God!

Now then, my brothers and sisters, it is this which Christ restores to us. He re-makes us, takes away the sinful, rebellious visage, which our father bore when he was expelled from the garden, re-stamps God's own face on us, and makes us in the image of the Most High again! Oh, if Eden were a sorrowful loss, and if it were desirable to obtain its Paradise again, surely the image of God must be desirable first and foremost of all!

But, then, ought not that to be the objective of all ambition, which is *the ultimate end of God's decree*? God, it is true, has

predestinated believers to heaven—but that is not all! I do not read in so many words that the saints are predestinated to Paradise, but I do read that they are predestinated to be conformed to the image of His dear Son. This is the end of the whole predestination of God—to make His elect like their elder brother, that He may be the first-born among many brethren! And that which God sees great enough to be the objective of all His acts in providence, and all His deeds in grace—that which He makes the ultimate end of His predestination—ought certainly never to be a trifle to you and to me! Rather, we ought to pant and long for it as the highest desire of our souls.

But again—the image of Christ is *the Spirit's latent work in us*. In that day, when we are regenerated, the new man is put into us. Now, in what image is that new man? It is in the image of Him that created him! The new man, we are expressly told by Paul, is renewed in the image of Christ Jesus. The moment that a sinner believes, there is put into him the first germ of a perfect Christ; it needs but that it should be nourished by the Spirit, and continually fed, and it will grow into the perfect stature of a man in Christ. Yet even now in a believer, who was converted but yesterday, there is the image of Christ, though it has not come to the perfect stature—just as the new-born child is a man, and in a certain sense perfect and bears completely the image of manhood, yet it is true that that image is not fully developed. So in the new-born believer, there is Christ, the indwelling Christ, but it is the Christ of the manger, rather than the Christ of the wilderness. There is an Infant Christ in every Christian—that Christ is to grow and to expand—and then, at last, in death, shaking off the coils—the troublesome burden of the old man—this new man which has been growing these years by divine grace shall step out. And as the serpent casts off its old skin, and comes out fresh and young covered with azure

hues, so shall the new man leave all corruptions behind! And we shall be discovered to be made in the perfect image of Christ Jesus, our Lord and Master! Now, if this is the Spirit's work, certainly it ought to be our love, and we ought to be all seeking after it.

But further, my dear friends, I need not plead this case with you if you are Christians, for *there is not a believer alive who does not pant to be like Christ*. If I had but one prayer to pray, and might not pray another, it would be this, "Lord, make me like Christ," for that is to comprehend all our other prayers in one! Like Christ, free from all corruptions should I be—free from infirmity and passion—I might be tempted, but I could say, "The Prince of this world comes and has nothing in me." "Like Christ"—O if that prayer should involve the lion's den, or the furnace's fiery heat, never mind! We could take these encumbrances upon the blessed estate if we could but once have the fair hands. To be like Christ—oh, what trial would you not endure with it, even though you had the direst tribulations! Better to be like Christ in His poverty, in His wanting a place whereon to lay His head—better to be like He is as despised and rejected of men, than to be like a Caesar, or the richest man in the world's eye, the most happy of men! Better to be with Christ in His worst estate than to be with an evil man in his best! If, then, this is the universal prayer and cry of the Christian, shall not we, my brothers and sisters, as part of the same family, join in it and say, "Lord, make me to be conformed to the image of Christ, my Lord"?

And after all, if we need anything to whet our appetites and to stimulate our desires once more—is not this *our highest glory on earth*, and *is not this our crowning privilege above*? What more glorious for a man than to be like Christ? I do believe that if the spirit of envy could penetrate the hierarchy of angels, Gabriel would envy the poorest man on earth, because that

man has a possibility of being like Christ—while the angel—though he may be like He is in some respects, can never grow into the perfect stature of a *man* in Christ! I do think, brethren, that if it came to the point today, and the angelic spirits could have permission to exchange their robes of light for our livery of rags—if they could lay aside their harps to take up the tools of our toil—if they could relinquish their crowns to have their immortal brows moistened with our sweat. If they could give up the golden streets to tread earth's mire and dirt—they would think it a high honor and a matchless privilege to be allowed to make the exchange—with this proviso—that thereby they might be recognized as being in the likeness of the Son of God! Why, this will make believers throughout eternity distinguished! Many a man has thought that a few hour's toil was but a mere trifle—a few minutes' exposure of his life was a little thing only to be snapped at if he might by that, win years of honor and esteem among the sons of men. But what must it be in comparison when these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, and put us in the posture and give us the possibility of becoming conformed to the image of Christ? I tell you, Gabriel—if you can hear the voice of mortals—that sinner, though I am, and groaning beneath the load of my inbred sin; mixed though I am with the sons of men and often groaning in the tents of Kedar; yet, I would not change places with you, for I have the hope, the hope to which you can not aspire, that after I have slept in death, I shall wake up in *His* likeness! And as I have borne “the image of the earthy,” so shall I bear “the image of the heavenly.” You will not scorn me, I know, bright spirit, because I bear the broken and disfigured image of the earthy. You, too, would be glad to try to bear it if you might afterwards, as the result thereof, bear the image of the heavenly! To see the glee of Christ is angels' joy. To wear that face is ours! To bow before it is their delight, but to be transformed into it

is our privilege—a privilege, I dare say, which no other creature that God has ever made shall possess—the privilege of being like the Son of man, and so, like the Son of God!

III. But, thirdly and lastly, IS IT POSSIBLE? IS IT POSSIBLE?

“I have tried,” says one, “to make myself like Christ, and I cannot.” Indeed, you cannot. Ah, there is a skill needed to make you like Christ! Why, sirs, the most wondrous artists who have never failed before, always fail in the very portrait of Christ! They cannot paint the Chief among ten thousand, the altogether lovely; they fail entirely when they once come there. They may labor, they may strive, but He is fairer than the sons of men; and if so with the earthy image, what must it be with that within? Orators, before whose eloquence men have been swayed to and fro as the waves are tossed by the fourth wind, have confessed their utter inability, by many figures of speech, ever to reach the excellences of Christ. Divine poets, whose hearts have been pregnant with celestial fire, have been compelled to lay down their harps and relinquish all hope to ever sing the s of songs concerning this fairest Solomon. And must it not be a vastly harder task for a man to be made like Christ? If we can neither paint Him, nor sing Him, nor preach Him, how can we live Him? How can we be like He? How can we bear His image, if we cannot even paint it? Indeed, if this were our work, it would be impracticable, and we might dissuade you from the task! But it is not *your* work, it is *God's* work. ‘Twas God who predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son; and God who “made the decree” will fulfill it Himself! And by His omnipotence, the same power which created Christ in the virgin’s womb shall create a Christ even in our sinful hearts, and cause our sins to die out before the indwelling of the living Christ!

But wherein lies the hardness of our being made like Christ? I suppose it lies first, in *the material to be worked upon*. “Oh,” says one, “there is never a possibility of making an image of Christ out of *me*. Sculptors choose polished marble. I, indeed, am but a rough unhewn stone of the quarry—unworkable! I know that the chisel will only blunt its edge upon me; I never can be made like Christ. What? Build a temple for God out of bramble bushes? Make a crown for the King of kings out of common pebbles of the brook? “No,” we say, “it cannot be!” But, stop, sir—what *matters* the *material* when you know the great Creator? God is the great artist who has predestinated and decreed that He will make you, who are today like a devil, one day to be like Christ! It is a daring task; it is like God! It is an impossible task; it is only fit for one hand and that one has undertaken it and will achieve it! For, sirs, when God decrees a thing, what is to stand in His way? He can make pathways through the flood—He who can take the fiery power out of the flame—He can take the drowning influence out of the waters. To Him all things are possible. Can He not, then, even in the morgue of your heart, put a Christ who shall bring a glorious resurrection, put a new life in you, and transmute even the base metal of your nature till you shall become like the golden nature of Him who is God incarnate? Oh, when we have God to deal with—what matters the material? He can overthrow your depravity, can cast off your lust, and make you like your Lord!

“Ah, but,” says one, “there is another difficulty. Think *what a world I live in*. How can I be like Christ? It is very well preaching this, sir, to us. If you had a number of hermits’ cells for us all to live in, it might be done; if you would build a large monastery and let us all live as Christians together, it might be possible. But I tell you, sir, you do not know my business! It cannot be done, sir. I have to mix with men that curse and blaspheme; I cannot be like Christ. Besides, my business is so trying to the

temper, so irritating, it cannot be done, sir, I tell you! And then, you do not know we have so many tricks in trade, and our trade has so many temptations in it that it is very difficult for us to prevent ourselves being decoyed. Sir, it is not possible for us to be like Christ while we have to mix with this wicked world! We get one touch, as it were, put into the picture on a Sunday, and we think we shall be like Christ one day, but the devil puts six black touches in during the week and spoils the whole! It cannot be done. Sir, it is not possible we should ever be like Christ.” But God says it *shall* be done. God has predestinated you, if you are a believer, to be conformed to the image of His dear Son. Of course Satan will do his best to stop God’s decrees; but what shall become of anything that stands in the way of God’s decree? As the cart of Juggernaut rolls remorselessly on and crushes any man—be he king or whatever—who dares to place himself in his way, so shall God’s decree! On, on it goes and through blood and bones of your carnal nature, and natural depravity, that triumphant chariot of God shall grind! “A hideous figure,” you say. Indeed, sirs, you shall find that there is something hideous in your experience. You will have to suffer for it. If you are in this world you will have to be as Jesus was in this world; rest assured that though God will make you like Christ, yet inasmuch as you are in a world of sinners, it will necessitate your suffering *like He* suffered! It will not take from you the power to bear His image, but it will bring about you, as a hornet’s nest, all those who hated Christ before.

I was standing one day at my window when living far from London, and I saw on a house opposite, a canary, which had by some means or other got loose from its cage. It had no sooner rested upon the roof than about 20 sparrows came round it and began to pick and pull, and although the poor thing resisted and flew here and there, it stood but a very poor chance in the midst of so many enemies. I remembered that

text—“My heritage is unto me as a speckled bird; the birds round about are against her.” That will be your lot. Mark this! If you are to be like Christ, you will be a speckled bird, and if you are not pecked upon by others, you may question whether you are not one of their own kind, and therefore they let you alone and freely associate with you. But if you differ from them, and prove you have another nature than theirs, you will surely be opposed and maligned, even as your Master was!

Once more and I have done; many a Christian heart has said, “I think the difficulty about the material is not so great when I think of the omnipotence of God; and the difficulty about the associations is not so very hard, for I can suffer and I am willing to suffer if I may but be like Christ. But the great and insurmountable obstacle is this—*that image is so perfect*, I can never reach it! It is high as heaven—what can I know? It surpasses my thoughts; I cannot even conceive the ideal; how then can I reach the fact? If it were to be like David, I might hope it. If it were to be made like Josiah, or some of the ancient saints, I might think it possible. But to be like *Christ*, who is without spot or blemish, and the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely, I cannot hope it. I look, sir; I look and look, and look again, till I turn away, tears filling my eyes and I say, ‘Oh, it were presumption for such a fallen worm as I to hope to be like Christ.’” And did you know it, that while you were thus speaking, you were really getting the thing you thought to be impossible? Or did you know that while you were gazing on Christ, you were using the only means which can be used to effect the divine purpose? And when you bowed before that image overawed, do you know it was because you began to be made like it? When I come to love the image of Christ, it is because I have some measure of likeness to it! It was said of Cicero’s works, if any man could read them with admiration, he must be in a degree an orator himself. And if any man can

read the life of Christ and really love it, I think there must be somewhat—however little—that is Christ-like within him. And if you as believers will look much at Christ, you will grow like He! You shall be transformed from glory to glory as by the image of the Lord. I look at you; I do not grow like you. You look at me, you grow not like me. You look at Christ—Christ looks at you—He is photographed on you by His own power of light. Without need of any light beyond Himself, He photographs His image on the face of those who live much in fellowship with Him, and who contemplate much His character. Now then believer, it is true the image of Christ is sublime, but then it, by the Spirit, makes you into itself so that the difficulty supplies the means, and that which looks like the obstacle becomes really the means to the attainment thereof! Go again and look at Christ. Go and weep because you are not like He is. Go and bow before Him with adoration. Go and strain upwards to that great height. In doing so your very failures are successes; your fears are proofs that you are beginning to be like He is! Are you not beginning to sorrow as He sorrowed? Your very agony, because you cannot be as He is, is a beginning of the agony which He endured, because He would have had the cup pass from Him. I say, brothers and sisters, that the more you look at Him, though it may tend to dispirit you, that very dispiriting is a part of the divine process! It is a chipping away from the block of marble a blemish, which, if not removed, would have ruined the image entirely. God help you to live near to Christ and so shall you be more and more like He is every day!

To conclude—one thing is certain and having mentioned that, I have done. You will either bear the image of Christ or the image of Satan! You will be developed, every one of you, sirs. Either those eyes will develop till they are the very eyes of fiends and roll with the hellish leer of blasphemy; that mouth

will be developed till it gnashes its teeth in diabolic scorn; that hand will be developed till it has itself as though it were iron and dares to defy the Eternal; that soul will be developed till it becomes a living hell, a hell as full of pains as hell itself is full of demons; or else—and God grant that you may have this last alternative!—or else those eyes will shine till they become like the eyes of Christ, which are as flames of fire; that face will be transformed till it becomes like the face of Christ, as though it glowed with heaven itself; and that heart will be developed till it becomes a heaven as full of songs as heaven itself is full of music! By faith in Christ, or unbelief, your destiny may be known! Do you believe in Christ? You are predestinated to be like He is! Are you an unbeliever? Then if you die so, you shall be transformed into the image of darkness! God save you! Christ help you! “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved,” for, “He who believes, and is baptized shall be saved; but he who believes not, shall be damned.”

God add His blessing for Jesus’ sake!

356 WORDS OF EXPOSTULATION – JER. 2:18

**A Sermon
Delivered on Sabbath Morning, January 20th, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At Exeter Hall, Strand**

“And now what have you to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? Or what have you to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?” — Jeremiah 2:18

THE JEWS had been chosen by God to be a special people separated to Himself forever. By various miracles, by many mercies, by strange deliverances, He had proved Himself to be to them a God worthy of their trust. Yet, strange to say—and yet not strange when we know that they were fallen men like ourselves—the Jews were constantly desirous to mix with the nations. They broke down the hedges with which God had enclosed them as a sacred garden; they desired to be laid like common lands, and to be joined with other peoples. No, more than this—they forsook their own true and loving God who had never deserted them, and they sometimes adopted the deities of Egypt and at other times the false gods of Assyria! They seemed never to be content with even the gorgeous ceremonials of their own temple; they must build altars after the fashion of Damascus; they must have Sitals on every high place, according to the custom of the accursed nations whom the Lord, their God, had driven out before them! And they seemed as if they had never reached the full desire of their hearts till they had mingled with the rites of God, all the filth

and the abominations with which heathens adored their gods. Constantly did the Lord reprove them for this—for this infatuation of theirs which made them turn aside from Him, the living water, to hew out to themselves broken cisterns which could hold no water. They were “often reproved,” but they often “hardened their necks;” often were they chastened, and they were smitten so often that “the whole head was sick, and the whole heart was faint;” they had been chastened so sorely that from the soles of their feet even to their head, they were full of wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores! Yet they still went after evil; they still turned aside from the righteous and true God. Our text contains one instance of God’s expostulating with His people. He says to them, “What have you to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of the muddy river?”—for, so it may be translated—and of course that term is applied to the Nile by way of contempt. “Why need you go to drink of that muddy river? What have you to do with Assyria, to drink the water of Euphrates? Why do you turn aside and leave your own cool streams of Lebanon? Why do you forsake Jerusalem to turn aside to Noph and to Tahapanes? Why are you so strangely set on mischief that you cannot be content with the good and healthful, but would even follow after that which is evil and deceitful?”

Taking the text just as it stands, I intend, by God’s help, to make a question of it to you. To me and to you may God the Holy Spirit apply it, and may this be a time for all God’s people, to every convinced soul, yes, and to the careless, too—a time of searching of heart. May God question us and may we be prepared to answer honestly. May the Holy Spirit push home the solemn inquiries, and may we with truthful hearts search and look and give earnest heed.

I shall apply the text to three characters—first to the *Christian*; secondly, to the *awakened conscience*; and, thirdly, to the

careless sinner. My sermon is not intended to instruct your minds, but to stir up your hearts.

I. Addressing myself to the **CHRISTIAN**, I shall use the text in three senses while I expostulate with you in regard to sin, to worldly pleasure, and to carnal trust.

1. And first, O true believer, called by grace and washed in the precious blood of Christ, “What have you to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of the muddy river?” What have you to do with the sins which once delighted you, and which now find happy pastime for the world? What have you to do with your deceitful lusts, with the indulgence of your old passions? What have you to do to follow the multitudes which do evil? Believer, answer these questions especially if you have lately fallen into sin, if you have backslidden in heart, and if you have been led to backslide in your ways. Answer me, what have you to do—what excuses have you for what you have done? Do you see yonder a gang of men, dragging, like so many beasts of burden, a tremendous load? Listen to the cracking of the whip of the overseer! Do you see how they pull and strain till it seems as if their every sinew would snap? Do you observe them as the hot sweat stands upon their brow? Look at them! Let the gang stay awhile, while we examine them. I can understand why all these are oppressed with sore labor, for I can see the brand of the slave owner upon their backs. Their flesh is scarred. But what does this mean? There is one among them who is not a slave—a man who is free! What does this mean? How is it that he does the slaves’ work—that he bends his back to the task master’s yoke, when he is a free man? Can you answer the question? Let me ask it in your own case. I see the sinner burdened in the ways of evil; I see him pulling iniquity as though it were with a cart rope, laying hold with both his hands on everything that is full of iniquity. But what have *you* to do there? The slaves of Satan are but acting out their

condition; but what have you to do, to be his slave, since you have been redeemed with blood and set free by power? Why, man, you are no slave now you are a son of God! You are an heir of all things! You are joint-heir with Christ! What have you to do, then, in the service of sin and of Satan? Why do you follow these menial tasks? You will become a man who is to wear a crown in heaven and who, even now, can read his title to it! Answer, Christian, and be ashamed and be confounded, because you are demeaning yourself in thus sinning against your own soul!

A vision flits before my eyes. The Lord God has made a great feast; armies have met together; terrible slaughter has been the consequence. Men's arms have been red up to the very elbow in blood; they have fought with each other and there they lay, strewn upon the plain—thousands of bleeding carcasses. The vultures sniff the prey from far-off desert wilds—they fly, keen of scent. God has made a great feast for the fowls of heaven, and for the ravenous beasts of the earth. Listen to the whirring of their wings as they come in multitudes, for where the body is, there shall the vultures be gathered together. But what is that I see? I see a dove flying with the same speed as the vulture towards the carrion! O dove, what has brought you there in dangerous connection with your fierce enemies? Where are you going? Is there anything in that bloody feast that can content *you*? Shall your meek eyes glare with the fires of anger? Shall your fair white plumage be stained with gore, and will you go back to your dove-cot with your pinions bloody red? I appeal to you, my hearers! Can you answer the question? Can you explain the strange vision? How is it, then, that I see you, Christian, going with sinners after evil? Is it your food? If you are a child of God, sin is no more food for you than blood is for doves! If you have been “begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,”

your peaceful soul will be as much out of element as a dove upon a battlefield! And the sight—the *sight* of sin will be as horrible to you as the sight of slaughter to that timid dove which even now flies itself with rapid wings to the cleft of the rock. Christian, I say, if you do as the worldling does, you go against your *nature*—against your newborn nature! To him it is not strange—should not the swine eat husks? Is it not his proper food? Should not the sinner love to sin? Is it not his very element? But what have *you* to do? What have you to do, quickened of the Spirit, and renewed in the image of Christ—what have you to do?

You have seen in Scripture a dreadful picture of a madman, where Nebuchadnezzar the king runs with oxen and eats grass till his hair has grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws. Is he not the pitiful picture of a *backslider*? For what is a Christian when he plunges into sin, but as one who makes himself like the beasts that perish, and who herds with the common—yes—and the unclean beasts of the earth? O believer! If it is a pitiful thing to see a man make himself a beast, how much more lamentable to see a Christian make himself a worldling! “Come you out from among them; touch not the unclean thing.” Why should the soul of my turtle dove be given up to its enemies? Why should the lamb flock with the wolves? Come out, I pray you—leave this darkened filth and be clean, you vessel-bearer of the Lord! Come forth from the midst of that plague land, where you can get nothing but the ashy hue of leprosy, and be clean! Today the Lord invites you; refuse not His invitation, but return, you backsliding children of men!

The question, then, cannot be answered—because when a Christian goes into sin, he commits an inconsistent act—inconsistent with the freedom which Christ has bought for him, and inconsistent with the nature which the Holy Spirit has implanted in him.

Let us press forward! Christian, what have you to do with sin? Has it not cost you enough already? What? Man, have you forgotten the times of your conviction? If you have, my brother, *I have not*. At the very mention of that word, I think I hear my chains rattling anew. Was there ever a bond-slave who had more bitterness of soul than I? Five years a captive in the dungeons of the law, till my youth seemed as if it would turn into premature old age and all the buoyancy of my spirit had been removed! O God of the spirits of all men! Most of all ought *I* to hate sin, for surely most of all have I smarted beneath the lash of Your law! And as I look round, knowing the experience of some of you, I can recall to my mind the stories you have told me; how when you had first felt your need of a Savior, you could not endure yourselves. Ah, there are those among you, who when you were under strong convictions of sin were ready to commit self-destruction! You prayed, but found no answer; you sought, but obtained no mercy; there were not creatures out of hell more wretched than you were then! What? And will you go back to the old curse? Burnt child, will you play with the fire? What? Man, when you have already been torn in pieces by the lion, will you step a second time into his den? Have you not had enough of the old serpent? Did he not poison all your veins once, and will you play upon the hole of the asp, and put your hand upon the cockatrice den? Have you not seen enough of the leopards, and of the dragons, and will you step a second time into their dens? Oh, be not so mad! Be not so foolish! Did sin ever give you pleasure? Did you ever find any solid satisfaction in it? If so, go back to your old drudgery; go back, I say, and wear the chain again if you delight in it. But inasmuch as I know, and you know, that sin did never give you what it promised to bestow—inasmuch as it did delude you with lies, and flatter you with promises which were all to be broken—I pray you be not beguiled a second time! Be

not a second time led into captivity—be free and let the remembrance of your ancient bondage forbid you to wear the chain again!

There is yet another light in which to put the sin of the believer. Let me repeat the question once again—“What have you to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of the muddy river?” There is a crowd yonder. They have evidently assembled for some riotous purpose. They are attacking one man. There are very many of them. Oh, how they howl!—oh, how they scream! They give Him no space to take His breath, no time to rest. Let me press through the throng and look at the man. I know Him at once! He has a visage more marred than that of any other man. ’Tis He! It is the Crucified One; it is none other than Jesus, the Son of Man, the Savior of the world! Listen to the blasphemies which are poured into His ears! See how they spit in His face, and put Him to an open shame. Onward they bring Him, and you hear them cry, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” They are doing it—they have nailed Him to the cross—yonder is a man with the hammer in his hand who has just now driven in the nails. Look round upon the mob. I can well comprehend why yonder drunkard, why yonder swearer, why the whoremonger, and the like of infamous notoriety should have joined in this treacherous murder; but there is one man there—I think I know his face—yes, I have seen him at the sacramental table, eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ! I have seen him in the pulpit saying, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” I have seen him on his knees in prayer, pleading what he called, “The precious blood.” What have you to do in this counsel of the ungodly, this scene of sin without a parallel? “What are you doing here, Elijah?” In the name of love, and of every holy thing that can ever pertain to a human heart—what are you doing here? Are you sickened at heart at such a spectacle—a

Christian crucifying Christ? That spectacle is one in which you have had a share! You, too, when you have backslidden and have sinned—you have “Crucified the Lord afresh, and put Him to an open shame.” Is there any other picture needed to set my text in the very strongest light? “What have you to do, O Christian, in the way of Egypt, to drink the water of the muddy river?” Cry revenge against yourself, because you have murdered your Lord, and opened His wounds anew!

Have patience with me a moment while I turn my question over and revolve it yet again. Believer, you have rebelled against your God! You have done despite unto His Spirit! How will you answer for this? What will you say to a scoffing world when the quick eyes of the sinner shall detect you? What will you say when he hisses out, “There’s your religion”? How will you answer him? You may pretend to do so, but do you not feel that he will get the best of the argument? If he goes his way, and says the religion of Christ is a lie and hypocrisy, what will you have to say? Surely you will have to hide your face in confusion, and bemoan yourself because by this act you have given the enemy cause to blaspheme! And what will you say to Christ’s Church when the Church shall say to you, “What are you doing here?” How will you excuse yourself for dishonest acts in business, or for any lust into which you have fallen? Will you tell the Church it was your old nature? But how will you answer, when the Church says, “They who are in Christ have crucified the flesh and its affections and lusts”? More than this, how will you answer your own conscience? Will you use some Antinomian quibble, and apply that as a plaster to your wounds? No! If you are a child of God, you will have to smart for it. The waters of the muddy river may be sweet to the Egyptians, but they will be bitter to you. You shall have, as it were, a cauldron in your heart, if you drink thereof. Christians can never sin cheaply—they pay a heavy price for all the pleasures that they

ever find in evil. And what will you say to your Lord and Master next time you are at the sacramental table? How will you dare to eat that bread and drink that wine? And when you are alone on your knees, and seeking fellowship with Him, how will you dare to seek it, when you have just now been following His enemies and imitating them? Ah, well may He say to you, “I have withdrawn Myself; I have gone, for you have grieved My Spirit, and vexed My soul.” Believer, if Jesus Christ were here, what would you say to make an excuse for your sin? Surely you would be speechless as the dumb, and silent as the grave! Your tears might make confession; your shudders should deepen your guilt; but your lips could not make an apology. What have you to do, O Christian, in the way of evil? What are *you* doing here, O *God’s Elijah*?

I do not know whether there are any Christians here who have fallen into any special sin during this last week. If there are, brothers and sisters, open your heart to this question. It may be, my Master has sent me to you to nip your sin in its bud—to bring you back before you have backslidden very much. Turn, my brothers and sisters! He has not forgotten His love to you! Turn! His grace is still the same! With weeping and with bitter lamentation, come to His footstool, and you shall be once more received into His heart, and you shall be set upon a rock again, and your goings shall be established.

2. To take a different view of the subject. The pleasures of this world sometimes entice the people of God, and they find some degree of mirth therein. To those Christians who can find pleasure in the common amusements of men, this question may be very pertinently put—“What have *you* to do to drink the water of that muddy river?”

I may be speaking to some believers who try if they can, to keep their conscience quiet while they frequent places of amusement—they lend their sanction to things which are not

spiritual, and sometimes even not moral. Now, I put this question to them. Christian, you have tasted of better drink than the muddy river of this world's pleasures can give you. If your profession is not a lie, you have had fellowship with Christ; you have had that joy which only the blessed spirits above, and the chosen ones on earth can know—the joy of seeing Christ and leaning your head upon His bosom. And do the trifles, the songs, the music, the merriment of this earth content you after that? Have you eaten the bread of angels, and can you live on husks? Good Rutherford once said, “I have tasted of Christ's own manna, and it has put my mouth out of taste for the brown bread of this world's joys.” I think it should be so with you. Again, believer, have you not already learned the hollowness of all earth's mirth? Turn to your neighbor and ask him. Does he frequent the theater? Does he go from one party of pleasure to another? Does he indulge in the common pleasures of the world? Ask him whether they have ever satisfied him! If he is a worldling, and is honest, he will say, “No.” He will tell you that his soul pants after something better than fashion and dissipation can afford him. He will tell you, too, that he has drained that cup, and it is not the wine which he thought it was; that it excites for the moment, but leaves him weak, and miserable afterwards. What? Shall the parings and waste of this world's joys, suit the heir of heaven?—You who profess to be of nobler birth, and to be brother to the angels—no—next akin to the eternal Son of God Himself—are you to wallow in this mire, and think it a soft and downy couch fit for a royal resting place? Get up, believer! You are not lost to every sense of shame! Betray not yourself in seeking satisfaction wherein worldlings confess they have never found it. But let me ask you—will these pleasures yield to you any helps in your growth in grace? You say the world is crucified unto you—will these pleasures help to crucify it? You have prayed that you may be

made like Christ—will these things help to conform you to His image? Often do you cry, “Oh Spirit of God, purge out the old leaven from me.” Will these help to purge out the old leaven? Unless you will fling the lie into the face of all your prayers, I pray you, shun these things! Fly at higher game than this. Let the mere hawk fly at the sparrow, but the eagle needs something nobler to be the object of its chase. If you were of the world, it would be right for you to love her; if she were your mother, you might nurse—but even then should not be satisfied with the breasts of her consolation. But you confess that not *this* world, but the *next* is the mother of your soul! I pray you then, be not content with what this earth yields, but lift up your eyes, and expect your manna to spring not from the earth, but from heaven, and may it drop into your hands!

I can never understand that Christianity which alternately goes out to find joy in worldly amusements, and returns home to have fellowship with Christ. In the life of Madame Guyon, who, though professedly a Papist, one must always receive as being a true child of God, I have read an anecdote something to this effect. She had been invited by some friends to spend a few days at the palace of St. Cloud. She knew it was a place full of pomp and fashion, and I must add, also of vice. But being persuaded by her friend, and being especially tempted with the idea that perhaps her example might do good, she accepted the invitation. Her experience afterwards should be a warning to all Christians. For some years that holy woman had walked in constant fellowship with Christ—perhaps none ever saw the Savior's face and kissed His wounds more truly than she had done. But when she came home from St. Cloud, she found her usual joy was departed—she had lost her power in prayer; she could not draw near to Christ as she should have done. She felt in going to the lover of her soul as if she had played the harlot against Him. She was afraid to hope that she could be received

again to His pure and perfect love, and it took some months before the equilibrium of her peace could be restored, and her heart could yet again be wholly set upon her Lord. He that wears a white garment must mind where he walks when the world's streets are as filthy as they are. He that has a thousand enemies must take care how he exposes himself. He who has nothing on earth to assist him towards heaven should take care that he goes not where the earth can help towards hell! O brothers and sisters shun, I pray you, fellowship with this world, for the love of this world is enmity against God! Now some will say that I am an ascetic and wish you to become Puritans. I wish we were Puritans, most certainly, but I am no ascetic. I believe the Christian ought to be the happiest man in the world, and I believe he is, too! But I know that *this world* does not make him happy—it is the *next world*. I say that the believer has a surer and certain right to be a happy and a cheerful person than any other, but if only in this world we had hope, we would be of all people the most miserable, because this world yields no joy to us.

3. For one minute I shall now take my text with regard to the Christian in a third sense. We are all tried with the temptation to put our trust in things which are seen, instead of things which are not seen. The Lord has said it—"Cursed is he that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm," but, "Blessed is he that trusts in the Lord." Yet Christians often do trust in man, and then our text comes home—"What have you to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the water of that muddy river?" "Some trust in horses, and some in chariots, but we will stay ourselves upon the Lord God of Israel." Look at yonder believer; he trusts in Christ and only in Christ for his salvation, and yet he is fretted and worried even though this is the day of rest, about something in his business. Why are you troubled, Christian? "Because of this great care," he says. Care? Have you care? I

thought it was written, “Cast your burden upon the Lord.” “Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, make known your needs unto God.” Can you not trust God for temporals? “Ah,” says the believer, “I wish I could.” Believer, if you cannot trust God for temporals, how dare you trust Him for spirituals; surely if He is worthy to be trusted with eternity, He must be fit to be relied upon in *time*. Can you trust Him for your soul’s redemption, and yet not rely upon Him for a few paltry pounds? Then what do you trust in? “Oh, I wish I had a good friend,” says one. “I wish I had someone at my back to help me.” Indeed, sir, what have you to do to go in the way of Egypt, to want to drink of that water? Is not God enough? Do you want another eye beside that of Him who sees all things? Do you want another arm to help besides Him who—

“Bears the earth’s huge pillars up,
And spreads the heavens abroad?”

Is His heart faint? Is His arm weary? Is His eye grown dim? If so, seek another God; but if He is infinite, omnipotent, faithful, true and al-wise, why do you go abroad so much to seek another confidence? Why do you rake the earth to find another foundation, when this is strong enough and broad enough and deep enough to bear all the weight which you can ever build thereon? Christian, be single in your faith! Have not two trusts, but one! Believer, rest only on your God, and let your expectation be from Him!

God bless you, believer. Let this question ring in your ears this week, and if you are tempted to sin, or to worldly pleasure, or to casual trust, think you see your minister, and that you hear him saying in your ears—“What have you to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of the muddy river? Or what have

you to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of Euphrates?”

II. I now come to the second part of my subject. Let not our friends grow dreary. I shall be brief on the matter that remains—that the Word may be felt.

CONVICTED SINNER, I hope I have some such here. Some of those precious ones of God, whose eyes are bejeweled with the tears of penitence, and whose hearts are like the fragrant spices, which when broken, send out a sweet perfume. And so, my friend, you feel your lost estate. God’s Holy Spirit has kindly looked upon you, and begun a good work in your soul. And yet during the past week, you have fallen into your old sin. Ah, ah, smarting and yet sinning; wounded and yet rebelling! Pricked with the ox-goad, and yet kicking against the pricks! It is hard for you! It is hard for you! To sin with a steeled conscience is easy, but to sin when conscience is raw, is hard, indeed! You have a hard task; you have to go on in sin, and tread its thorny path, when your feet are tender, having just been burned in the fire! And what was the cause of your sin, after all? Was it worth sinning for—to grieve your conscience and vex the Holy Spirit? I have heard of a man who had just begun the Christian life, and he had some months of sorrow, owing to a hasty temper. His neighbor had let some of his cattle stray into the field; he asked him to fetch them out again, and mend the fence. His neighbor would not, and he flew into such a passion with him, that afterwards he sat down and cried! Said he, “Why, if all the cows in the field were sold, and I had lost the money, they were not worth the bother I made about them, nor worth one moment of the grief which I have to suffer.” Oh, what fools we all are! Let us, however, write ourselves fools in capital letters if when conscience is tender, we yet go and do the very thing which we hate, and choose the very cup which was so bitter to our taste, so nauseous to us just now!

And then, convicted sinner, another question: You are under conviction of sin, and you have been lately—as it is a festive season—you have been frequenting the dance hall, or the theater. Now these are amusements for *worldlings*. Let them have them; I would not prevent them for a moment; let every man have his own amusement and his own joy. But what is this to *you*? What have you to do with it? Why, you know you thought the place would fall down while you were sitting there! What business had you there? Suppose the devil had come in to take one of his own away, and had taken you? He might have been forgiven for his mistake—for he found you on his grounds! You were trespassing, and therefore if the old Giant Grim had taken you away to Despair's Castle, who could have blamed him? Were you not for the time in his territory? Had he not, therefore, a right to do as he would with you? But you who have a tender conscience, how could you be merry there—listening to light music while you had a heavy heart? I never like to see a newly-made widow at a wedding, and I do not like to see a convicted sinner where others are making merry. When you have joy in your heart, you may join with the kindred sympathy of other men's joys; but while your soul is bleeding, what a mockery, what a farce it is for you to be pretending to find joy in the very thing which has given you the pain! You have heard the old and oft-repeated story of the celebrated clown who was under conviction of sin. He went to a certain doctor, and told him he was exceeding melancholy, and he wished that he could advise him something that would cheer his spirits. The doctor prescribed for him some remedies, but they failed. He went at last to a celebrated popular preacher—who ought not to have been a preacher, for he did not understand the gospel at all—and he, fool that he was, said to the poor man, "Well, I do not know what will cheer you up, but I should say if you were to go and see the tricks and antics

of such-and-such a person, the clown at such-and-such a theater, if anything would make you merry, that would.” “Alas, sir,” said he, “I am that man myself!” So strange must have been his position, making others roar with laughter while he himself was roaring with terror! And yet this is just your position, convicted sinner, if you can find merriment in the world! Let other men have it; it is not the place for you; stand aloof from it, and go not there.

And then, again, take care, convicted sinner that you do not trust in yourself in any degree. What have you to do to go to Egypt to drink the waters of the muddy river? Your works have ruined you! How can they save you? Your works have damned you! How can they wipe out the sentence of damnation? Fly to Christ; fly to the flowing wounds, and to the open heart. There is hope for you there! But at the foot of Sinai there is thunder, and fire, and smoke; and if Moses did exceedingly fear and quake, how much more should you, when the mountain seems as though it would roll upon you and crush you, and bury your spirit in eternal destruction? God help you, convicted sinner, never to go in that way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihon—for these things are not for you.

III. Lastly, to any here present who are **CARELESS**. I have a hard task, and but a few moments for the attempt to bring a reasonable question to unreasonable men. You tell me, sirs, that you love the vanities of this world, and that they content you. I look you in the face and remind you that there have been many madmen in this world besides yourselves! Yet as there is some spark of reason left, let me see if I can kindle a flame of thought therewith. Sinner, God is angry with the wicked every day. What have you to do with joy? You are already condemned because you believe not on the Son of God! What have you to do with peace—a condemned man dancing in his cell at Newgate with chains about his wrists? You’re a dying man; you

may drop down dead in this hall! What have you to do with merriment? You! If you were sure you should live a week, you might spend six days if you would, in sin; but you are not sure you will live an hour! What have you to do with sin and its pleasures? God is furbishing His sword today; it is sharp and strong as the arm which shall wield it. That sword is meant for you unless you repent! What have you to do with taking your ease and eating and drinking and being happy? That man yonder, with his neck in the noose, and his feet upon the treacherous drop—is it fitting that he should sing songs and call himself a happy man? This is your position, sir! Sinner, you are standing over the mouth of hell upon a single plank, and that plank is rotten! Your hope is as the spider's web—your confidence is as a dream! Death follows you, not as the slow-paced footman, but on horseback, the skeleton rider on his pale horse is rattling after you with tremendous speed! And ah, hell follows him! Hell follows Death—the sure and certain consequence of sin! And what have you to do with making merry? Have you made appointments for the next week? Keep them if you dare, if in the name of God you can make it consistent; if you can make it consistent with reason to be busy about the body, and neglect the soul, to fritter away that time on which eternity depends, then go and do it! If it is a wise thing for you to leap before you look; if it is a prudent thing to damn your soul eternally for the sake of a few hours of mirth—say so—go and do it like an honest man! But if it is unwise to forget *forever* and only think of *today*; if it is the strongest madness to lose your life to gain the mere apparel with which the body is to be covered; if it is madness to fling away jewels, and hoard up dust as you are doing, then I pray you, I beseech you, answer the question—“What have you to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor?” Turn, turn! “For why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him

who dies, says the Lord God: therefore turn yourselves, and I will love you.” “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him. And to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”

Lo, the cross is lifted up before you! Jesus bleeds! His wounds are streaming with His life-blood! Yes and with yours, too! Believe, sinner! Trust Him—with your whole heart trust Him! Come to Him, come to Him! With weeping and supplication I pray you come! Knowing the terrors of the Lord, I beseech you! As one who pleads for his own life, I plead with you! By heaven, by hell, by time flying so swiftly, by eternity approaching so silently, by death, by judgment, by the awful soul-reading eyes, by the rocks whose stony bowels shall refuse your prayer to fall upon you, by the trumpet, and the thunders of the resurrection morning, by the pit of hell and by the flame—I pray you think, and believe in Him who is the Lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world!

God bless my words to you through His Spirit’s energy, and He shall have the praise forever and ever! Amen.

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A Sermon
Delivered on Sabbath Morning, January 27th, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At Exeter Hall, Strand

“And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the feet, and girt about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; His feet like unto fine brass, as if refined in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars: and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead.” — Revelation 1:12-17

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST is the same yesterday, today and forever. Having neither beginning of days, nor end of years, He is a priest forever after the order of Melchisedek. But the views which His people have of Him are extremely varied. According to our progress in grace, will be the standpoint from which we view the Savior; and according to the position from which we look at Him, will be what we see of Him. Christ is the same, but believers do not all see Him in the same clear light, nor do they all approach to the same nearness of fellowship. Some only know His offices; others only admire His character; far fewer commune with His person; but there are some who have advanced still further—who have come to feel the unity of all the Church with the person of Christ Jesus their Lord. Under

the Old Testament, the lesson to be taught was the same, but the capacity of the learners differed, and hence, the mode of teaching the lesson differed also. A poor man, under the Jewish dispensation, was the type of an uninstructed Christian; the rich man was the picture of the well-taught believer. Now, the poor Jew brought a turtle dove or two young pigeons (Lev 1:4-11). The necks of these were wrung, and they were offered. The poor man in that was only taught this lesson—that it was only by death and blood that his sin could be put away. The richer Israelite, who had it within his power, brought a bullock (Lev 1:3-9). This bullock was not only slain, but it had to be cut in pieces; the legs, the fat, the innards were washed in water, and all these were laid in special order upon the altar. This was to teach him, even as Christ now teaches the intelligent and instructed believer, that there is within the mere act of shedding blood an order and a fullness of wisdom which only advanced believers can perceive. The scapegoat taught one truth, the paschal lamb another; the showbread set forth one lesson, the lighting of the lamps another. All the types were intended to teach the one great mystery of Christ manifest in the flesh and seen of angels. But they taught it in different ways, because men in those times, as now, had different capacities, and could only learn a little at a time. As it was under the Old Testament, it is under the New. All Christians know Christ, but they do not all know Him to the same degree and in the same way. There are some believers who view Christ as *Simeon* did. Simeon saw Him as a baby. He took Him up in his arms, and was so overjoyed, that he said, “Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace according to Your word.”

You know how, in the Church of England, that Song of Simeon is chanted every Sabbath, as if it were true that many of the worshippers had never gotten further than that—to know Christ as a baby—a Savior whom they could take up in

their arms, whom they could apprehend by faith and call their own. There is an advance, however, upon that experience when not only can we take Christ up, but we can see Christ taking *us* up; when we can see not only how we apprehend Him by faith, but how *He* apprehended us of old in the everlasting covenant, and took up the seed of Abraham, and was made in their likeness, that He might redeem their souls. It is a great joy to know Christ, though it is but only the infant consolation of Israel. It is a happy privilege to be permitted with the Easterns to bring our gold, frankincense and myrrh, and worship Christ, the newborn King. This, however, is but a lesson for *beginners*; it is one of the first syllables of the schoolbook of divine grace. To take Christ up in our arms is the sure pledge of salvation, but at the same time, it is but the dawn of heavenly light in experience.

But, my dear brothers and sisters, the *disciples* of Jesus knew Christ in a higher degree than Simeon—for they regarded Him not simply as the Incarnate One—but as their Prophet and Teacher. They sat at His feet; they heard His words; they knew that never man spoke like that man. Under His teaching, they were led on to high degrees of knowledge. He gave to them the divine texts from which, when the Spirit had descended, they drew sacred lessons which they taught the multitude. They knew more, I say, of Christ than Simeon—Simeon knew Him as one whom he could take hold of by faith, and who would make glad his eyes; but the disciples knew Him as one who *taught* them—not merely saved them—but *instructed* them. There are hundreds of believers who have got as far as this. Christ is to them the great teacher of doctrine, He is the great expositor of God's will and law, and they look up to Him with reverence as the Rabbi of their faith. Yes, but there was one of the disciples, at least, who knew Jesus Christ even better than this! There was one chosen out of the twelve, as the 12 had

been chosen out of the rest, who knew Christ as a dear companion, and as a sweet friend. There was one who knew His bosom as affording a pillow for his weary head, one who had felt His heart beat close to his cheek—one who had been with Him on the mountain of Transfiguration, and had enjoyed fellowship with the Father, through His Son Jesus Christ. Now I fear that those who advance as far as John did are not very many. They are doctrinal Christians, and thus they have made an advance upon those who are only trusting Christians, and not more. But John had taken a wonderful stride before his fellow men, when he could claim Christ as being dear to him, the companion of his life, the friend of his days. May the Lord teach each of us more and more how to walk with Jesus and to know His love!

But, brothers and sisters, there was one who comprehended Christ Jesus fully as well as the beloved disciple. 'Twas *Mary*. She knew Him as one who had been born in her, and born of her. Blessed is that Christian who can say that Christ is formed in him, the hope of glory, and who has come to look not at Christ as only on the cross, but as Christ in his own soul, who knows that he, himself, as truly bears the Savior within him as ever did his Virgin Mother—who feels that in him, too, by the Holy Spirit, Christ is conceived; that in him, the nature of Christ, that Holy Thing which is born of the Holy Spirit, is ripening and maturing till it shall destroy the old man, and in perfect manhood shall be born into eternal life. This, I say, even eclipses John's knowledge, but it is not perhaps the highest of all! Further than this we will not venture this morning. At some other time, when our eyes are more enlightened, we may take a glimpse of a yet more excellent glory.

Dear friends, you who love the Savior, wish for nothing so much as to see more and more of Him! Your desire is that you may see Him as He is, yet I can well conceive, if you might

indulge your wishes, you would wish that you had seen Him as He was *transfigured*. Do you not look back almost with envy upon those three favored ones who went up to the top of Tabor, and were there overshadowed when His garment became whiter than any fuller could make it, and there appeared unto Him, Moses and Elijah talking with Him? You need not envy, for you know how they were overpowered with the sight, and “were heavy with sleep.” You, too, would sleep if you had but the same strength as they, and had to gaze upon the same surpassing glory. I know, too, you have wished that you could have seen Him in the *garden of Gethsemane*. Oh, to have seen that agony, to have heard those groans, to have marked that bloody sweat as it fell in clots to the frozen ground! Well might you envy those who were chosen to keep the sacred vigil, and to have watched with Him one hour. But you will remember that they slept. “He found them sleeping for sorrow.” With your powers of endurance; if you had no more than they, you, too, would sleep. As in the transfiguration, so in that agony and bloody sweat, there was a sight which eyes can never see—because there was a glory and a shame which man can never comprehend.

But perhaps some of you have longed and wished that you had seen Him on the cross. Oh, to have beheld Him there, to have seen those hands nailed “to fix the world’s salvation fast,” and those feet nailed to the wood as though He tarried to be gracious, though the world waited long in coming. Oh, to have seen that mangled naked body, and that pierced side! John, you who did see and bear witness, we might well envy you! But, oh, my brothers and sisters, why should we? Why should we? For have we not seen by faith all of Christ, without that horror which must have passed over the beholders, and which did pass over His mother when a sword also pierced through her own heart, because she saw her Son bleeding on the tree? Oh, how

delightful it must have been to have beheld the Savior on the morning of the resurrection!—to have seen Him as He rose with new life from the chambers of the dead, to have beheld Him when He stood in the midst of the disciples, the doors being shut and said, “Peace be unto you!” How pleasant to have gone to the top of the mountain with Him, and to have seen Him as He ascended, blessing His disciples, a cloud receiving Him out of their sight! Surely we might well desire to spend an eternity in visions like these! But permit me to say, that I think the picture of our text is preferable to any, and if you have desires after those I have already mentioned, you ought to have far more intense longings to see Christ as John did in this vision, for this is, perhaps, the most complete, the most wonderful, and at the same time, most important manifestation of Christ, that was ever seen by human eyes.

There will be two things which will take our attention this morning. The first briefly, namely, *the importance of this vision to us*; and then, secondly, *the meaning of the vision*.

I. THE VALUE OF THIS VISION TO US.

Some may be inclined to say, “The preacher has selected a very curious passage of Scripture; one that may tickle our fancy, but that can be of no spiritual benefit to us.” My friends, you labor under a very great mistake, and I trust I may convince you of that in a minute or two. Remember that this representation, this symbolic picture of Christ, is a representation of *the same Christ who suffered for our sins*. Strangely diverse as it may seem to be, yet here we have the very same Christ. John calls Him the Son of man, that sweet and humble name by which Jesus was so known to describe Himself. That He was the same identical person is very clear, because John speaks of Him at once as being *like* unto the Son of man, and I think he means that he perceived in His majesty, a likeness to Him whom he had known in His shame. There was not the

crown of thorns, but he knew the brow. There was not the mark of the wounds; perhaps the seven stars had taken the position of the prints of the nails, but he knew the hands for all that. As in our new bodies, when we rise from the tomb, we shall no doubt know each other— though the body which shall rise will have but faint resemblance to that which is sown in the tomb, for it will be a miraculous and marvelous development in flower of the poor withered thing that is but the buried seed. But I doubt not that I shall be able to recognize your visage in heaven because I knew your countenance on earth; so did John discover, despite the glories of Christ, the identical person whom he had seen in abasement and woe. Christian, look with reverence there. There is your Lord, the Christ of the manger, the Christ of the wilderness, the Christ of Capernaum, and Bethsaida, the Christ of Gethsemane, the Christ of Golgotha is there, and it cannot be unimportant for you to turn aside to see this great sight!

Further, this picture represents to us *what Christ is now*, and hence, its extreme value. What He was when He was here on earth is all-important to me, but what He is now is quite as much a matter of vital consequence. Some set exceedingly great store by what He *shall be* when He comes to judge the earth in righteousness, and so do we. But we really think that Christ in the future is not to be preferred to a knowledge of Christ in the present; for we want to know today, in the midst of present strife, and present pain, and present conflict, what Jesus Christ is *now*. And this becomes all the more cheering because we know that what He is now *we* shall be—for we shall be like He is when we shall see Him as He is.

And yet, a third consideration lends importance to the topic of our text, namely, that Christ in the text is represented as *what He is to the churches*. You will perceive He is portrayed as standing in the midst of the golden candlesticks, by which we

understand the churches. We love to know what He is to the nations; what He is to His peculiar people, the Jews; what He will be to His enemies; but it is best for us, as members of Christian churches, to know what He is in the churches, so that every deacon, elder and church member here should give earnest heed to this passage—for he has here pictured to him that Christ to whom the Church looks up as her great Lord and hope—that Messiah whom every day she serves and adores!

And I might add yet once more—I think the subject of our text is valuable when we consider *what an effect it would have upon us if we really felt and understood it*—we would fall at His feet as dead. Blessed position! Does the death alarm you? We are never so much alive as when we are dead at His feet. We are never so truly living as when the creature dies away in the presence of the all-glorious King. I know this, that the death of all that is sinful in me is my soul's highest ambition, yes, and the death of all that is carnal, and all that savors of the old Adam. Would that it would die! And where can it die but at the feet of Him who has the new life, and who, by manifesting Himself in all His glory is to purge away our dross and sin? I only would that this morning I had enough of the Spirit's might so to set forth my Master, that I might contribute even in a humble measure to make you fall at His feet as dead, that He might be in us our All-in-All!

II. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS VISION?

“Take off your shoes, for the place whereon you stand is holy ground.” If God manifest in a bush commands solemnity, what shall we say of God manifest in Christ, and manifest, too, after the most marvelous manner? The words of our text are *symbols*—they are not to be understood literally. Christ does not appear in heaven under this literal form, but this is the appearance under which He was set forth to the intellect of John. John was not so enlightened as to understand any of this

literally; he knew that the candlesticks were not meant for candlesticks, but for the seven light-giving Churches. He knew that the stars were not stars, but ministers, and he understood right well that all the whole description through, it was the *symbol* and the spirit of the vision he was to look to, and not to the literal words.

But to begin—*“And in the midst of the seven candlesticks, one like unto the Son of man clothed with a garment down to the feet and girt about the chest with a golden band.”* We have, first, in Christ as He is today, a picture of His official dignity, and of His royal honors. *Clothed with a garment down to the feet*; this was the robe constantly worn by kings; the garment which descended and left only the feet apparent. This was also the peculiar dress of the priest. A priest of the Jewish dispensation had the long flowing white robe which reached down to the ground and covered him entirely. Christ, then, in being thus clothed, asserts His kingship and His eternal priesthood. It may indicate the fact, too, that He has clothed Himself with righteousness. Though He was once naked, when He was the substitute for naked sinners who had cast away the robe of their righteousness, He is naked no more; He wears that garment dipped in His own blood, woven from the top throughout by His own hands—He wears Himself that garment which He casts over the whole Church, which is His body. However, the main idea here is that of official dignity and position; and when you read of the golden band which was about the chest, it is a representation of how the high priest was girt. He was girt with a band or belt that had gold in it. The belts of the other priests were not of gold; that of the high priest's was mainly made of that precious metal, and it was girt about the chest—not at the waist—but across the breast as if to show that the love of Christ, or the place where His loving heart beat most, was just the spot where He bound firmly about Himself the garments

of His official dignity; as if His love were the faithful belt of His loins; as if the affection of His heart always kept Him fast and firm to the carrying out of all the offices which He had undertaken for us. The picture is not difficult to imagine before your eyes; I only want the Christian mind to stop a minute and consider it. Come, believer, you have a Lord to worship who is clothed today with supreme office! Come before Him, He can govern for you—He is King! He can plead for you—He is Priest! Come, worship HIM, HE is adored in heaven! Come, trust Him—lo, at that golden band hang the keys of heaven and death, and hell. No more despised and rejected of men; no more naked to His shame; no more homeless, or friendless! His royal dignity ensures the obedience of angels, and His priestly merit wins the acceptance of His Father—

“Give Him, my soul, your cause to plead,
Nor doubt the Father’s grace.”

Let His garment, and His robe compel your faith to trust your soul, yes, and your temporal affairs, too, wholly and entirely in His prevailing hands.

You will perceive that there is no crown upon the head as yet—that crown is reserved for His advent. He comes soon to reign, even now He is King—but He is a king rather with the band about His loins, than with the crown upon His head. Soon He shall come in the clouds of heaven, and His people shall go forth to meet Him, and then shall we see Him “with the crown wherewith His mother crowned Him in the day of His espousals, and in the day of the gladness of His heart.” Our soul longs and watches for the day when the many crowns shall be upon His head; yet even now, is He King of kings, and Lord of lords; even now is He the High Priest of our profession, and as such we adore and trust Him.

“His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow.” When the Church described Him in the Canticles, she said, “His locks are bushy and black as a raven’s.” How are we to understand this apparent discrepancy? My brothers and sisters, the Church in the Canticles looked *forward*—she looked forward to days and ages that were to come—and she perceived *His perpetual youth*; she pictured Him as one who would never grow old, whose hair would always have the blackness of youth. And do we not bless God that her view of Him was true? We can say of Jesus, “You have the dew of Your youth.” But the Church of today looks *backward* to His work as complete; we see Him now as the Ancient of eternal days. We believe that He is not the Christ of merely 1800 years ago, but, before the daystar knew its place, He was one with the Eternal Father. When we see in the picture His head, and His hair white as snow, we understand the antiquity of His reign. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” When all these things were not, when the old mountains had not lifted their hoary heads into the clouds, when the yet more hoary sea had never roared in tempest—before the lamps of heaven had been lit, when God dwelt alone in His immensity, and the unnavigated waves of ether, if there were such, had never been fanned by the wings of the seraph, and the solemnity of silence had never been startled by the song of cherubim, Jesus was of old in eternity with God! We know how He was despised, and rejected of men, but we understand, too, what He meant when He said, “Before Abraham was, I AM.” We know how He who died when but a little more than 30 years of age, was verily the Father of the everlasting ages, having neither beginning of days nor end of years. No doubt there is here coupled with the idea of antiquity, that of reverence. Men rise up before the hoary head and pay it homage; and do not angels, principalities, and powers bow

before Him? Though He was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, yet is He not crowned with glory and honor? Do they not all delight to obey His behests, and lay their borrowed dignities at His feet? O Christian! Rejoice that you serve one so venerable, so worthy to be praised; let your soul join now in the song which rolls upward to His throne, “Unto Him who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Alpha and the Omega, unto Him be glory, and honor, and dominion, and power, forever and ever. Amen.”

“His eyes like flames of fire.” This represents Christ’s oversight of His Church. As He is in the Church, the Ancient of Eternal Days, her everlasting Father, and her Head to be revered, so is He in the Church, the Universal Overseer, the great Bishop and Shepherd of souls. And what eyes He has! How penetrating! “Like flames of fire.” How discriminating! “Like flames of fire,” which melt the dross and only leave the real metal. “Like flames of fire,” He sees—not by light without—but His own eyes supply the light with which He sees! His knowledge of the Church is not derived from the prayers of the Churches, nor from her experience of her needs, nor from her verbal statements, He sees by no borrowed light of the sun, or of the moon—His eyes are lamps unto themselves. In the church’s thick darkness, when she is trampled down, when no light shines upon her, He sees her—for His eyes are “like flames of fire.” Oh, what sweet consolation this must be to a child of God! If you cannot tell your Lord where you are, He can see you, and though you cannot tell what you really need, or how to pray, yet He cannot only see, but He can see with such discrimination, that He can tell precisely what your true needs are, and what are only fancies of an unsanctified desire. “His eyes like flames of fire.” Why you are in darkness and you see no light—but He *is* the light that lights every man who comes into the world, and He sees by the light of His own

person all that goes on in you. I love that doctrine of Christ's universal oversight of all His Church. You know there is an idea sometimes held out that the church ought to have a *visible* head so that all matters may come by degrees through a hierarchy to some one man, that so one man knowing all things, may be able to guide the Church aright. An absurd, because impossible, idea! What *man* could possibly say, "I keep the Church; I water it, I watch it every moment." No, no, it must be this—"I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment lest any hurt it; I will keep it night and day." There is never a trial to the church, there is never a pang she feels but those eyes of fire discern! Oh, think not you would rather view the eyes that once were fountains of tears; they wept for your sins, those sins are put away, it is better for you now that you should have one whose eyes are like flames of fire—not to perceive your sins—but to burn them up; not merely to see your needs, but forever to fulfill your desires! Bow before Him, lay bare your heart, hope not to conceal anything. Think it not necessary that you should explain anything—He sees and He knows, for His eyes are like flames of fire.

"And His feet were like fine brass, as if they were refined in a furnace."

The head, you see, is reverent; the feet are blazing; the countenance is like the sun for glory; the feet like burning brass for trial. I think we may understand by this the Church of God *on earth*—those saints united to Christ who are the last of the body; the lower part who are in these times still treading the earth. Christ is in heaven; His head is like "the sun that shines in its strength." Christ is on earth in the midst of His Church, and where His feet walk among the golden candlesticks, they walk in fire. They are like brass refined in a furnace. Now, we think that wherever Christ is, there will be the fire of trial to His Church. I would never believe that we were on the Lord's side if all men were on our side; if the words we speak were not

constantly misrepresented, we could not imagine we spoke the words of God; if we were always understood, we would think that we spoke not those things which the carnal mind cannot receive! No, brethren, no— expect not ease! Expect not that you shall attain to the crown without *suffering*. The feet of Christ burn in the furnace and you belong to His body—you do not belong to His head—for you are not in heaven! You do not belong to His loins—for you wear not the golden band—but you belong to His feet, and you must burn in the furnace! What a wondrous picture is this of Christ! Can you conceive it? You know that the robe came down even to His feet. Perhaps it covered them, but yet the glowing heat was such that through the robe might be seen the burning of the feet of brass. They were fine brass, too. They were metal that could not be consumed, a metal that would not yield to the heat. And so is Christ's Church! The old motto of the early Protestants was an anvil, because "The Church," they said, "is an anvil that has broken many hammers." The Evil One smites her—she does not reply except by suffering and in that—enduring with patience—is her kingdom! In that suffering is her victory! In the patient possessing of her soul, in her glowing in the furnace, and not yielding to the fire, in her shining and being purified by its heat, and not giving way and being molten by its fury, in that is as greatly the triumph of Christ, as in that bright countenance which is as "the sun shining in its strength." I rejoice in this part of my text. It comforts one's soul when cast down and deeply tried. "His feet were like fine brass, as if they were refined in a furnace." Let us say to our souls—

*"Must I be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease;
While others fought to win the prize,
And sailed through bloody seas?"*

***No, I must fight if I would reign;
Increase my courage, Lord!
I'll bear the toil, endure the pain,
Supported by Your word."***

But I must pass on having no time this morning to dwell long on any one of these points. *"His voice as the sound of many waters."* And what is the voice of Christ? It is a voice which is heard in heaven. You angels, bow before Him! They hear the command—"And at the name of Jesus every knee does bow of things in heaven." It is a voice that is heard in hell! You fiends, be still! "Vex not My anointed. Do My prophets no harm." And there those hell hounds tug at their chains, longing to escape from their imprisonment. It is a voice that is heard on earth, too; wherever Christ is preached, wherever His cross is lifted up, there is there a voice that speaks better things than the blood of Abel! Sometimes we are apt to think that Christ's voice is not heard. We, His ministers, are such feeble creatures; if we have some few thousands to listen to our voice, yet how many forget! Amidst the storm of the battle cry, amidst political clamors, who can hope that the still small voice of the ministry should be heard? But it *is* heard! Across the Alleghenies, the voice of God's minister echoes; no evil thing shall in the end stand against the protests of God's servants; that which has made slavery tremble to its very soul, has been the constant protest of Christian ministers in England! And though the lying prophets of the Southern States have sought to undo the good, yet must they fall before the force of the truth of God. There is not a humble village pastor standing in his pulpit to edify his feeble flock, who is not thereby exerting an influence on all generations yet to come. The minister of Christ stands in the midst of the telegraphic system of the universe, and works it according to Jehovah's will; all society is but a tremulous mass

of jelly yielding to the influence of Christ's gospel! I say not, sirs, that there is any power in *us*; but there is power in Christ's word when it peals through us in trumpet tones! There is power in Christ's word to waken the dry bones that lie in many a valley. China shall hear! India must listen, even though their gods hear not, yet tremble! And feeble though we are in ourselves, yet does God make us mighty to the pulling down of strongholds, and He shall make us conquerors through His divine grace!

If you could stand upon some exceedingly high mountain and could be gifted with enlarged ponders of vision, it would be a wonderful thing to be able to see the Atlantic and Pacific, the Indian Ocean, and all the seas of the world at once. Suppose we are standing on the loftiest summit while a tremendous storm sweeps o'er the whole. The sea roars and the fullness thereof—yes, all the seas roar at once—the Atlantic echoes to the Pacific, the Pacific passes on the strain to the great Indian Ocean, the Mediterranean cries to the Red Sea, the Red Sea shouts aloud to the Arctic, and the Arctic to the Antarctic! They clap their hands, and all at once there is a voice of many waters. Such is the voice of Christ's ministry on earth! It may seem to be feeble, but it never is. There may be but a handful of men; they may be in the glens of Piedmont; they may be found upon the hills of Switzerland, and they may be dying for Christ—but their tramp is the tramp of heroes—their voice shakes the ages and eternity itself trembles before it! Oh, how consolatory to the heir of heaven and to the minister of Christ is the fact that *His* voice is as “the sound of many waters.”

“And He had in His right hand seven stars.” The Church should always see Christ as holding up her ministers. Ministers are very much in danger. Stars, or those things that seem to be stars, may be but shooting stars; they may be but meteors and flash awhile, right soon to melt away—but the ministers of Christ, though they are in danger, yet, if they are Christ's ministers,

they are perfectly safe! He keeps the seven stars. The celestial Pleiades of the gospel are always in Christ's hand. And who can pluck them from there? Church of God, be it always your prayer that Christ would keep His ministers wherever they are—commend them to Him, and remember you have this as a kind of promise on which to ground your prayer. Brothers and sisters, pray for us! We are but like twinkling stars at least, and He is as the sun that shines in its strength. Ask Him to give us light; ask Him to keep us always burning; ask Him that we may be as the pole-star guiding the slave to liberty; ask Him that we may be as the stars that make the southern cross—that when the mariner sees us, stars of Christ—he may see not each star individually, but Christ manifested in beauteous form in the shining of all combined! This shall be my portion today. “The seven stars were in His right hand.” How many would like to quench the light of God's ministers! Many criticize; some abuse, more still misrepresent. I can scarcely say a sentence in which I am not misconstrued, and I aver that I have often taken Cobbett's rule to speak not only so that I could be understood, but so that I thought I could not be *misunderstood*. And yet, I am; but what does it matter? What does it mean? Still, if the stars make not glad the eyes of men; if they are in the Lord's hand, they ought to be satisfied. They should rest content and not trouble themselves. Loud let the waves roar, and let the envious sea send up her boisterous billows to quench the heavenly fires. Aha, O sea, upon your tranquil couches sleep the stars; they look down upon your boisterous waves, and when you shall subside in calm, and the clouds that have risen from your vapor have passed away, be it the lone star or one of a constellation; it shall shine out yet again, and smile on your placid waters, till you, O ocean, shall mirror the image of that star, and you shall know that there is an influence—even in that envied spark which you have sought to

quench—to lead your floods, and make them ebb, and make them flow, so that you shall be servant to one whom you thought to put out forever! The seven stars are in Christ’s right hand.

I shall not detain you much longer, but we must finish this wonderful description. “*Out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword.*” I have looked at one or two old pictures in which the artists of the olden times have tried to sketch this vision. I think it a most ridiculous thing to attempt! I conceive that this was never meant to be painted by any human being; nor can it be! But one old artist seems to have caught the very idea. He represents the breath of Christ in vapor, assuming the form of a two-edged sword very mighty and strong to cut in pieces His adversary. Now, as the gospel of Christ must be *heard* because it is “the voice of many waters,” so it must be *felt*, for it is “a two-edged sword;” and it is surprising how the gospel really is felt, too! It is felt by those who hate it; they writhe under it; they cannot sleep after it; they feel indignant; they are horrified; they are disgusted and all that; but still there is a something within which does not let them remain quiet. That two-edged sword gets at the marrow of their bones. They wish they had never heard the Word, though they can never heal themselves of the wound they have gotten by it. And to those who are blessed under the Word—what a two-edged sword it is to them! How it kills their self-righteousness! How it cuts the throat of their sins! How it lays their lusts dead at the feet of Jesus! How all-subduing is it in the Son! No sword of Gideon was ever so potent against a horde of Midianites as the sword that comes out of Jesus’ lips against the hosts of our sins! When the Spirit of God comes in all His power into our souls, what death He works, and yet what life— what death to sin, and yet, what new life in righteousness! O holy sword! O breath of Christ! Enter into our hearts and kill our sins!

It is delightful to see each day how the preaching of the Word is really the sword of God. I do sometimes retire from the pulpit sorrowing exceedingly, because I cannot preach as I would, and I think that surely the Master's message has had no effect among you. But it is perfectly marvelous how many here have been called by divine grace. I am each day more and more astonished when I see high and low, rich and poor, nobles and peasants, moral and immoral alike, subdued before this conquering sword of Christ! I must tell it to the Master's honor, to the Master's glory, "His own right hand has gotten Him the victory." Here the slain of the Lord have been many! Here has He glorified Himself in the conversion of multitudes of souls!

But to conclude: "*His countenance was as the sun that shines in its strength.*" How can I picture this? Go abroad and fix your eyes upon the sun if you can. Select the day of the year in which it is most in the zenith, and then fix your steady gaze upon it. Does it not blind you? Are you not overwhelmed? But mark—when you can gaze at that sun with undimmed eyes, you shall even then have no power to look upon the countenance of Christ! What glory, what majesty, what light, what spotlessness, what strength!—"His countenance was as the sun that shines in its strength." Well may the angels veil their faces with their wings; well may the elders offer vials full of sweet odors, that the smoke of their incense may be a medium through which they may see *His* face. And well may you and I feel and say—

"The more His glories strike our eyes
The humbler we must lie."

But, Jesus, turn Your face and look on us. It is midnight, but if You turn Your face, it must be noon, for Your face is as the sun! Thick darkness and long nights have overwhelmed our spirits, and we have said, "I am shut out from the Lord forever!"

Jesus! Turn Your face and we are troubled no more! Sea of love, where all our passions rest, You circle, where all our joys revolve! You center of our souls—shine and make us glad! This sun, if we look at Him curiously to understand His glory, may blind us—but if we look at Him *humbly*, that we may receive His light, He will make our eyes stronger than they were, and shed sunlight into the thickest darkness of our despair!

Oh, Church of God! What do you say to Him who is your husband! Will you not forsake your own kindred and your father's house? Will you not long to know Him more and more, and shall it not be your cry today, "Mount Your chariot, Jesus! Mount Your chariot! Ride forth conquering and to conquer! Show Your face, and the darkness of superstition must melt before Your countenance. Open Your mouth, and let the two-edged sword of Your Spirit slay Your foes! Come forth, Jesus, bear the seven stars, and let them shine where light was never been before! Speak, Jesus, speak! And men will hear You, for Your voice is as the sound of many waters. Come, Jesus come, even though You bring the burning heat with You, and we, as Your feet glow in the furnace! Come, look on us and burn up all our sins with those eyes of fire! Come, show Yourself, and we will adore You, for Your head and Your hair are white like wool! Come, manifest Yourself, and we will trust You with Your garment, Your priestly garment. We will reverence You, and with Your golden band, we will adore You, King of kings and Lord of lords! Come then, that we may see You; that You may put the crown upon Your head, and the shout may be heard—"Hallelujah! Hallelujah! The Lord God Omnipotent reigns!"

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A Sermon
Delivered on Sabbath Morning, February 3rd, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At Exeter Hall, Strand

“That Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance.” — Ephesians 1:13-14

SO THEN, heaven, with all its glories, is an *inheritance*! Now, an inheritance is not a thing which is bought with money, earned by labor, or won by conquest; if any man has an inheritance, in the proper sense of that term, it came to him by birth; it was not because of any special merit in him, but simply because he was his father's son, that he received the property of which he is now possessed. So is it with heaven. The man who shall receive this glorious heritage will not obtain it by the works of the law, nor by the efforts of the flesh; it will be given to him as a matter of most gracious right, because he has been “begotten again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,” and has thus become an heir of heaven by blood and birth. They who come unto glory are sons. Is it not written, “The captain of our salvation brings many sons unto glory”? They come not there as servants; no servant has any right to the inheritance of his master; let him be ever so faithful, yet he is not his master's heir. But, because you are *sons*—sons by God's adoption, sons by the Spirit's regeneration—because by supernatural energy you have been born-again—you become inheritors of eternal life, and you

enter into the many mansions of our Father's house above! Let us always understand, then, when we think of heaven, that it is a place which is to be ours, and a state which we are to enjoy as the result of *birth*—not as the result of *work*. “Except a man is born-again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”—that kingdom being an inheritance, but until he has the *new birth*, he can have no claim to enter it. But, is it possible for us, provided that heaven is our inheritance, and we are God's children—is it possible for us to know anything whatever of that land beyond the flood? Is there power in human intellect to fly into the land of the hereafter, and reach those islands of the happy, where God's people rest eternally in the bosom of their God? We are met at the outset with a rebuff which staggers us—“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them who love Him.”

If we paused here, we might give up all idea of beholding from our houses of clay that goodly land and Lebanon; but we do not pause, for like the apostle, we go on with the text and we add, “But He has revealed it unto us by His Spirit.” It *is* possible to look within the veil! God's Spirit *can* turn it aside for a moment, and bid us take a glimpse—though it is but a distant one—at that unutterable glory! There are Pisgahs even now on the surface of the earth, from the top of which the celestial Canaan can be beheld; there are hallowed hours in which the mists and clouds are swept away, and the sun shines in its strength and our eyes, being freed from their natural dimness, behold something of that land which is very far off, and glimpse a little of the joy and blessedness which is reserved for the people of God hereafter! Our text tells us that the Holy Spirit is the *earnest* of the inheritance, by which I understand that He is not only the pledge, for a pledge is given for security, but when the thing pledged is *given*, then the pledge itself is

restored—but He is an *earnest*, which is a pledge and something more. An earnest is a part of the thing itself—it is not only a pledge of the thing for security—but it is a foretaste of it for present enjoyment. The word in the Greek has a stronger force than our word, “pledge.” Again I repeat it—if I promise to pay a man something, I may give him land or property in *pledge*; but if I pay him a *part of the sum* which I have promised, that is more than a pledge—it is an *earnest*, because it is a part of the thing itself. So, the Holy Spirit is a pledge to God’s people. Inasmuch as God has given them the graces of the Spirit, He will give them the glory that results from there. But He is more—He is a foretaste—He is a sweet ante past of heaven, so that they who possess the Spirit of God, possess the first tastes of heaven; they have reaped the first fruits of the eternal harvest! The first drops of a shower of glory have fallen upon them; they have beheld the first beams of the rising sun of eternal bliss; they have not merely a pledge for security—they have an *earnest*—which is security and foretaste combined! Understand, then, for this is what I am about to speak of this morning; by the Holy Spirit there is given to the people of God even now, experiences, joys and feelings which prove that they shall be in heaven—which do more, which *bring heaven down to them, and make them already able to guess in some measure what heaven must be!* When I have enlarged upon that theme, I shall take the black side of the picture, and remark that *it is possible for men on earth to have both a pledge and an earnest of those eternal pains which are reserved for the impenitent*—a dark subject—but, may God grant it may be for our profit and awakening.

I. First, then, THERE ARE SOME WORKS OF THE SPIRIT WHICH ARE PECULIARLY AN EARNEST TO THE CHILD OF GOD, OF THE BLESSINGS OF HEAVEN.

1. And first, *heaven is a state of rest.* It may be because I am constitutionally idle, that I look upon heaven in the aspect of

rest with greater delight than under any other view of it, with but one exception. To let the head which is so continually exercised, for once lie still—to have no care, no trouble, no need to labor, to strain the intellect, or vex the limbs! I know that many of you, the sons of poverty and of toil, look forward to the Sabbath, because of the enjoyments of the sanctuary, and because of the rest which it affords you. You look for heaven as Watts did in his song—

“There shall I bathe my weary soul
In seas of heavenly rest!
And not a wave of trouble will roll
Across my peaceful breast.”

“There remains therefore a rest to the people of God.” ‘Tis not a rest of sleep, but yet a rest as perfect as though they slept; it is a rest which puts from them all care, all remorse, all thoughts of tomorrow, all straining after a something which they have not as yet. They are runners no more—they have reached the goal! They are warriors no more—they have achieved the victory! They are laborers no more—they have reaped the harvest! “They rest,” says the Spirit, “they rest from their labors and their works do follow them.” My beloved, did you ever enjoy on certain high days of your experience a state of perfect rest? You could say you had not a wish in the entire world ungratified. You knew yourself to be pardoned, you felt yourself to be an heir of heaven, and Christ was precious to you. You knew that you walked in the light of your Father’s countenance; you had cast all your worldly care on Him, for He cared for you; you felt at that hour, that if death could take away your dearest friends, or if calamity should remove the most valuable part of your possessions on earth, yet you could say, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the

name of the Lord.” Your spirit floated along the stream of divine grace without a struggle; you were not as the swimmer, who breasts the billows, and tugs and toils for life; your soul was made to lie down in green pastures beside the still waters; you were passive in God’s hands; you knew no will but His. Oh, that sweet day—

“That heavenly calm within the breast,
Was the sure pledge of glorious rest,
Which for the Church of God remains,
The end of cares, the end of pains.”

No, it was more than a pledge; it was a part of the rest itself. It was a morsel taken from the loaf of delights. It was a sip out of the wine vats of immortal joy! It was silver spray from the waves of glory! So, then, whenever we are quiet and at peace—“For we who have believed do enter into rest,” and have ceased from our own works, as God did from His—when we can say, “O God, my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise”—when our spirit is full of love within us, and our peace is like a river, and our righteousness like the wave of the sea—then we already know in some degree what heaven is! We have but to make that peace deeper and yet more profound—lasting and more continual; we have but to multiply it eternally, and we have obtained a noble idea of the rest which remains for the people of God!

2. But, secondly, there is a passage in the book of Revelation which may sometimes puzzle the uninstructed reader, where it is said concerning the angels, that “They rest not day and night.” As we are to be as the angels of God, it must undoubtedly be true in heaven that in a certain sense, they rest not day or night. They always rest, so far as ease and freedom from care is concerned; they never rest, in the sense

of indolence or inactivity. In heaven, spirits are always on the wing; their lips are always singing the eternal *hallelujahs* unto the great *Jehovah* that sits upon the throne. Their fingers are never divorced from the strings of their golden harps; their feet never cease to run in obedience to the eternal will—they rest, but they rest on the wing. As the poet pictured the angel as he flew—not needing to move his wings but resting, and yet darting swiftly through the ether, as though he were a flash shot from the eyes of God. So shall it be with the people of God eternally; always singing—never hoarse with music; always serving—never wearied with their service. “They rest not day and night.” Have there ever been times with you, when you have had both the pledge and the earnest of this kind of heaven? Yes, when we have preached once, and again, and again, and again in one day, and some have said to me, “But the constitution will be destroyed, the mind will be weakened; such toil as this will bring the man low.” But we have been able to reply, “We do not feel it; for the more toil has been cast upon us, the more strength has been given.” Have you ever known what it is to have the pastor’s work in revival times, when he has to sit hour after hour, seeing convert after convert—when the time for one meal is past, and he has forgotten it? When the time for another meal has come and gone, and he has forgotten that—for he has been so busy, and so happy with his feast of ingatherings, that he has been like his Master, and has forgotten to eat bread and positively did not hunger and did not thirst—because the joy of the service had taken away all fatigue? Just at this hour, our missionaries are engaged throughout Jamaica in a sweltering sun, preaching the Word. Perhaps there has never been a more glorious revival than that which God has sent to that island—an island which has often been blessed, but which now seems to have received a sevenfold portion! One missionary, in writing home, says that he had not been in bed

one night for a week, and he had been preaching all day and all night long. And I do not doubt but his testimony to you would be, that at least, during the first part of the labor it seemed not to be labor; he could sleep on the wing; he could rest while he worked! The joy of success took away from him the feeling of weariness; the blessed prospect of seeing so many added to the Church of God had made him forget even to eat bread! Well, then, at such a time as that, he had a foretaste of the rest and the service, too, which remains for the people of God! Oh, do not doubt, if you find comfort in serving God—and such comfort that you grow not weary in His service—do not doubt, I say, but that you shall soon join that hallowed throng, who “day without night circle His throne rejoicing;” who rest not, but serve Him day and night in His temple! These feelings are foretastes, and they are pledges, too. They give some inklings of what heaven must be, and they make your title to heaven clear.

3. But let us pass on. Heaven is a place of *communion* with all the people of God. I am sure that in heaven they know each other. I could not, perhaps, just now prove it in so many words, but I feel that a heaven of people who did not know each other, and had no fellowship, could not be heaven! God has so constituted the human heart that it loves society, and especially the renewed heart is so made that it cannot help communing with all the people of God. I always say to my Strict Baptist brothers and sisters who think it a dreadful thing for baptized believers to commune with the unbaptized, “But you cannot help it; if you are the people of God, you must commune with all saints, baptized or not! You may deny them the outward and visible sign, but you cannot keep from them the inward and spiritual grace.” If a man is a child of God, I do not care what I may think about him—if I am a child of God I *do* commune with him, and I must! We are all parts of the same body, all knit

to Christ, and it is not possible that one part of Christ's body should ever be in any state but that of communion with all the rest of the body! Well, in glory I feel I may say, we know we shall converse with each other. We shall talk of our trials on the way there—talk most of all of Him who by His faithful love and His potent arm has brought us safely through. We shall not sing solos, but in *chorus* shall we praise our King! We shall not look upon our fellows there like men in the iron mask, whose name and character we do not know—for there we shall know even as we are known! You shall talk with the prophets; you shall have conversation with the martyrs; you shall sit again at the feet of the great reformers, and all your brothers and sisters in faith who have fallen before you, or who have rather entered into rest before you. These shall be your companions on the other side the grave! How sweet must that be! How blessed—that holy converse, that happy union, that general assembly, and Church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven! Have we anything on earth like this? Yes, that we have in miniature; we have the pledge of this; for if we love the people of God, we may know that we shall surely be with them in heaven! We have the *earnest* of it, for how often has it been our privilege to hold the highest and sweetest fellowship with our fellow Christians? Why, you and I have often said, "Did not our hearts burn within us while we talked together by the way, and Christ was with us both?" When we have been together, and the doors have been shut, has not the Master said, "Peace be unto you"? When love has gone from heart to heart, and we have all felt knit together as one man; when party names were all forgotten; when all jealousies and bickering were driven out of doors, and we felt that we were one family, and did all bear the same one name—having "one Lord, one faith and one baptism"? Then it was that we had the earnest, the foretaste,

the first drink of that well of Bethlehem which is on the other side the pearly gate of the Celestial City!

4. I have to be brief on each of these points, for there are so many to mention. Part of the bliss of heaven will consist *in joy over sinners saved*. The angels look down from the battlements of the city which has foundations, and when they see prodigals return, they sing! Jesus calls together His friends and His neighbors, and He says unto them, “Rejoice with Me, for I have found the sheep which was lost.” The angels begin the theme; the sacred fire runs through the host, and all the saints above take up the strain! Listen how they sing before the throne, for it has just been whispered there of some Saul, “Behold, he prays.” Listen how their songs get a new inspiration—how their eternal Sabbath seems to be Sabbatized afresh, and “the rest” becomes more joyous while they sing of new-born sons added to the family, and new names written in the register of the Church below! Part of the joy of heaven, and no mean part of it, will be to watch the fight on earth, to see the Conqueror as He marches on, and to behold the trophies of His grace and the spoils which His hands shall win. Is there anything like this on earth? Yes, there is when the Spirit of God gives to *us joy* over sinners saved! The other evening, when some of us sat in our Church meeting, what joy was there, when one after another, those who had been plucked from the deepest hell of sin made avowal of their faith in Christ! Some of us look back upon those Church meetings as the best nights we ever spent; when first one, and then another has said, “I have been plucked as a brand from the burning,” and the tale of divine grace has been told. And a third has stood up and said, “And I, too, was once a stranger wandering far from God, and Jesus sought me.” Why, we have, some of us, gone home and felt that it was heaven below to have been there! We have felt more joy over the conversion of others, we have sometimes thought, than

even over our own! It has been such bliss while we have taken the hand of the convert, and the tears have been in both eyes—when the word of gratitude has been spoken, and Jesus Christ has been magnified by lips that once blasphemed Him! My brothers and sisters, though the whole world should censure me, I cannot help it, I must tell it to the praise of God's free grace and boundless love! There are hundreds here who are the most wonderful trophies of grace that ever lived on earth! My heart has been gladdened, and your hearts have been gladdened, too. I must not keep it back! I *will* not! It was my Master's work! It is to His honor! It is to His praise! We will tell *that* on earth which we will sing in heaven! They *have* washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb! And, I do believe, that the joy we felt when sinners have been converted, has been an earnest and a pledge that we shall be partakers of the same joy in heaven!

5. But to proceed. Here is another earnest of heaven, which is rather a personal matter than one which is drawn from others. Did you ever get a knotty passage in Scripture which repeated itself in your mind so many times that you could not get rid of it? You borrowed some commentaries—you opened them, and you found that you might inquire within, but get no information whatever upon the particular subject you wished most to be informed about. Commentaries generally are books which are written to explain those parts of Scripture which everybody understands, and to make those that are dark more mysterious than they were before! At any rate, if that was the aim of the different authors, they have, most of them, admirably succeeded. I do not believe in great commentaries upon the whole Bible—no one man can write such a book so that all of it shall be valuable. When a man gives his whole life to some one book, that one is worth reading; when a man has taken up, as some have done, the Epistle to the Romans, or the

Book of Genesis, and gone on year after year toiling through it, then such a book has been a monument of labor, and has been valuable to the Christian student; but generally, large commentaries give little information where most it is needed. Well, disappointed, you have gone back to your Bible and have said, "I must not meddle with this text; it is above me." But it has repeated itself in your ears. You could not make it out. It has followed you—dogged your steps—it would not go away from you! At last you thought, "There was a message from God in that text." You prayed over it. While you were praying, some one word in the text seemed to lift itself right out of the connection, and shone upon you like a star! And in the light of that one word you could see the meaning of all the words that preceded and followed, and you rose up from your knees feeling that you knew the mind of the Spirit there, and had got a step forward in Scriptural knowledge. You remember the day, some of you, when you first learned the doctrines of grace. When we were first converted, we did not know much about them. We did not know whether God had converted us, or we had converted ourselves; but we heard a discourse one day in which some sentences were used, which gave us the clue to the whole system, and we began at once to see how God the Father planned, and God the Son carried out, and God the Holy Spirit applied! And we found ourselves, all of a sudden brought into the midst of a system of truths which we might perhaps have believed before—but which we could not have clearly stated, and did not understand! The joy of that advance in knowledge, by God's grace, was exceedingly great. I know it was to me. I can remember well the day and hour when first I received those truths in my own soul—when they were burnt into me, as John Bunyan says—burnt as with a hot iron into my soul. And I can remember how I felt I had grown all of a sudden from a baby into a man—that I had made progress in Scriptural knowledge,

from having got a hold, once and for all, of the clue to the truth of God! Well, now, in that moment when God the Holy Spirit increased your knowledge, and opened the eyes of your understanding, you had the *earnest* that you shall one day see—not through a glass darkly—but face to face, and by-and-by you shall know the whole truth, even as you are known!

6. But further than this—to put two or three thoughts into one, for brevity's sake—whenever, Christian, you have achieved a victory over your lusts—whenever after hard struggling, you have had a temptation dead at your feet—you have had in that day and hour a foretaste of the joy that awaits you, when the Lord shall shortly tread Satan under your feet! That victory in the first skirmish is the pledge and the earnest of the triumph in the last decisive battle. If you have overcome *one* foe, you shall overthrow them all; if the walls of Jericho have been dismantled, so shall every fort be carried, and you shall go up a conqueror over the ruins thereof. And when, believer, you have known your security in Christ—when you have been able to say, “I *know* that my Redeemer lives, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him”—when you have felt sure that earth and heaven might die, but *His love* could never pass away—when you have sung out the strong lines of Toplady—

“My name from the palms of His hands
Eternity will not erase!
Impressed on His heart it remains
In marks of indelible grace”;

when you have put your foot upon the rock and feel that you stood securely, knowing that you were safe in Him and because He lived, you must live also—in that hour you had the pledge and the foretaste of that glorious security which is yours,

when you are beyond gunshot of the infernal fiend—beyond even the howling of the infernal dog! O Christian, there are many windows to heaven through which God looks down on you; and there are some windows through which you may look up to Him. Let these *past* enjoyments be guarantees of your future bliss! Let them be to you as the grapes of Eshcol were to the Jews in the wilderness—they were the fruit of the land—and when they tasted them, they said, “It *is* a land that flows with milk and honey.” These enjoyments are the products of Canaan; they are handfuls of heavenly flowers thrown over the wall; they are bunches of heaven’s spices, brought to you by angel hands across the stream. Heaven is full of joys like these. You have but a few of them; heaven is full with them. There your golden joys are but as stones, and your most precious jewels are as common as the pebbles of the brook! *Now* you drink drops, and they are so sweet that your palate does not soon forThe get them; but *there* you shall put your lips to the cup and drink and never drain it dry. There you shall sit at the wellhead and drink as much as you can draw, and draw as much as you can desire. Now you see the glimmerings of heaven, as a star twinkling from leagues of distance; follow that glimmering, and you shall see heaven no more as a star, but as the sun which shines in its strength!

7. Permit me to remark yet once more, there is one foretaste of heaven which the Spirit gives, which it were very wrong for us to omit. And now, I shall seem, I dare say, to those who understand not spiritual mysteries, to be as one who dreams. There are moments when the child of God has real fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. You know what fellowship between man and man means. There is as real a fellowship between the Christian and Christ. Our eyes can look on *Him*. I say not that these human optics can behold the very flesh of Christ, but I say that the eyes of the soul can here, on

earth, more truly see Christ, after a spiritual sort, than ever eyes of man saw Him when He was in the flesh on earth! Today your head may lean upon the Savior's bosom; today He may be your sweet companion, and with the spouse you may say, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, for His love is better than wine." I pray you, think not that I rave! I speak what I know and testify what I have seen, and what many of you have seen and known, too. There are moments with the believer, when, whether in the body or out of the body, he cannot tell—God knows—but this he knows—that Christ's left hand is under his head, and His right hand does embrace him. Christ has shown to him His hands and His side. He could say, with Thomas, "My Lord, and My God," but he could not say much more. The world recedes, it disappears; the things of time are covered with a pall of darkness. Christ only stands out before the believer's view! I have known that some believers, when they have been in this state, could say with the spouse, "Stay me with apples, comfort me with flagons, for I am love sick." Their love of Christ, and Christ's love to them, had overcome them. Their soul was something in the state of John, whom we described last Lord's-Day morning—"When I saw *Him*, I fell at His feet as dead." A sacred faintness overcomes my soul; I die—I die to prove the fullness of *m* redeeming love, the love of Christ to me! Oh, these seasons! Talk not of feasts, you son of mirth! Tell us not of music, you who delight in melodious sound! Tell us not of wealth and rank, and honor, and the joys of victory. One hour with Christ is worth an eternity of all earth's joys! May I but see *Him*; may I but see *His* face; but behold *His* beauties—come winds, blow away all earthly joys I have—this joy shall well content my soul! Let the hot sun of tribulation dry up all the brooks; this fresh spring shall fill my cup full to the brim—yes, it shall make a river of delight, wherein my soul shall bathe! To be with Christ on earth is the

best, the surest, the most ecstatic foretaste and earnest of the joys of heaven! Do not forget this, Christian! If you have ever known Christ, heaven is yours; and when you have enjoyed Christ, you have learned a little of what the bliss of futurity shall be!

8. I do not doubt, also, that on dying beds men get foretastes of heaven which they never had in health. When Death begins to pull down the old clay house, he knocks away much of the plaster, and then the light of God shines through the chinks. When he comes to deal with our rough garment of clay, he pulls it to rags, first, and then it is we begin to get a better view of the robes of righteousness, the fair white linen of the saints with which we are always covered, though we know it not. The nearer to death, the nearer to heaven, says the believer! The more sick, the nearer he is to health; the darkest part of his night is, indeed, the dawning of the day—just when he shall think he dies—he shall begin to live! And when his flesh drops from him, then is he prepared to be clothed upon with his house which is from heaven! Children of God in dying have said wonderful things which it would be scarcely lawful for us to utter here. It needs the stillness of the robin—the solemn silence of the last hour—the failing eyes, the chinked utterances, the pale thin hands, to put a soul into their utterances. I remember when a Christian brother, who had often preached the gospel with me, was sorely sick and dying. He was suddenly smitten with blindness, which was a first monition of the approach of death, and he said to me—

“And when you see my eye strings break,
How sweet my moments roll;
A mortal paleness on my cheek,
But glory in my soul!”

He said it with such emphasis, as a man who, but two or three minutes after, stood before his God, that I can never read those lines without feeling how well the poet must have foreseen a death like his! Yes, there are mystic syllables that have dropped from the lips of dying men that have been priceless pearls! There have been sights of heaven seen in the midst of Jordan which these eyes cannot see until this breast shall be chilled in the dread and cold stream! All these things that we have mentioned are the fruits of “that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession.”

II. A few minutes only—and, O God! Help us! With all solemnity, I utter a few sentences upon **THE BLACK REVERSE OF THE JOYOUS PICTURE I HAVE PRESENTED TO YOU.**

There is another world, for the *wicked*, as well as for the righteous. They who believe *not* in Christ are no more annihilated than those who do believe in Him. Immortality awaits us all. We die, but we die not. We live *forever*. And if we fear not God, that immortality is the most frightful curse that ever fell on creature—

“To linger in eternal death,
Yet death forever fly.”

Can we tell what that *world of woe* is? In vain do we talk to you about the pit of hell that is *bottomless*, and the fire that never can be quenched, and the worm that dies not. These are but images, and images which are used so often, that we fear they are almost threadbare in your estimation, and you will scarcely give an ear to them! Listen, then, if you are this day without God, and without Christ in the world. You have in yourself a few sparks of that eternal fire; you have already been singed by the vehement heat of that furnace which to some men has been

so hot that even when they have passed it on earth, like Nebuchadnezzar's mighty men, they have fallen down, smitten by the heat thereof before they came within its flames! Ungodly, unconverted men have an uneasiness of spirit. They are never content; they need something. If they have that, they will need something more. They do not feel happy; they see through the amusements which the world presents to them; they are wise enough to see that they are hollow. They understand that the fair cheek is *painted*; they know that its beauty is but mere pretense. They are not befouled—God has awakened them! They are sensible enough to know that this world cannot fill a man's heart; they know that an immortal spirit is never to be satisfied with mortal joys. They are uneasy; they wish to kill time—it hangs heavy on their hands. They wish they could sleep 23 hours out of the four and twenty, or drink half the day. They try, if they cannot find some pleasure that may wake up their energies—some new device, some novelty, even though it were novelty of sin—which might give a little excitement to a palate that has lost all power to be pleased. Now, when a man gets into that uneasy state, he may make a guess of what hell will be. It will be that uneasiness intensified, magnified to the extreme—to wander through dry places, seeking rest, and finding none, always thirsting, but never having a drop of water to cool that thirst. Hungering, but feeding upon wind and hungering still; longing, yearning, groaning sighing, conscious of misery, sensible of emptiness, feeling poverty but never getting anything whereby that poverty may be made rich, or that hunger may be stayed! Ah, you uneasy ones, may your uneasiness bring you to Christ!

But unconverted men without Christ have another curse which is a sure foretaste to them of hell. They are uneasy about death! I have my mind now upon a person who trembles like an aspen leaf during a thunderstorm; and I know another man

who could bear a storm very well, but if there is the slightest thing the matter with him—if he has a cough, he fears his lungs are affected—if he feels a little hoarse, he is sure he will have bronchitis and die! And that thought of dying, he cannot bear; he will hear you talk about it and crack a joke over it merely for the sake of covering up his own dismay. He fancies you cannot see through him, but you can plainly discover that he is as afraid of dying as ever he can be. I know at this moment a family where the governess was instructed, when she took the job, to never mention the subject of death to the children, or else she would be instantly discharged. Oh that fear of dying which haunts some men! Not when their blood boils, and they are excited—then they could rush to the cannon’s mouth, but when they are cool and steady, and look at it—when it is not the sword’s point, and glory, but dying, mere dying—then they shiver! Oh, how these strong men start and how they quail! Full many an infidel has recanted his infidelity then—given it all up when he has come to deal with the awful mysteries of death! But those already of death are but the foreshadows of that darker gloom which must gather round your spirit, unless you believe in Christ! With some men it has even gone further than this. When a man has long resisted the invitations of the gospel, long gone from bad to worse, from sin to sin—a horror, an unspeakable horror—will seize hold upon him at times, especially if he is a man who is given to intoxication. Then a delirium will come upon him, mingled with a remorse, which will make his life intolerable! It has been my unhappy lot to see one or two such cases of persons who have been ill and have been vexed with fears—fears of a most hideous cast which I could not remove. You speak to them about Christ; they say, “What have I to do with Him? I have cursed Him hundreds of times.” You speak to them about faith in Christ; “Faith in Christ,” they say, “what is the use of that to me? I am past hope;

I am given up and I do not care about it, either.” And then they collapse—go back again into that dull despair which is the sure advance guard of damnation itself! With these men one may pray; they bid you pray *for* them, and then they say. “Get up, sir; it is of no use; God will never hear you for me.” They will ask you to go home and pray; but assure you that it will be useless to do so. You read the Bible to them. “Don’t read the Scriptures,” they say, “every text cuts me to the quick, for I have neglected the Word of God, and all my time now is past.” You tell them that—

“While the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return.”

No, no, *they* cannot! You may tell them that there is hope—that Jesus Christ calls many at the eleventh hour—you picture to them the thief on the cross. No, no—they put far from them all hope and choose their own delusions—and perish. Now such men give the gravest picture of what hell must be in these forebodings of the wrath to come. I saw one man, now in eternity, and where he is, God knows. I could not describe to you what I saw that day of him. He said he would not die—and walked up and down as long as there was life in him, under the notion, as he said, that if he could walk about, he knew he should not die. He would not die, he said. He would live, he *must* live. “I cannot die,” he said, “for I must be damned if I die. I feel I must.” And that poor wretch, sometimes giving ear to your admonitions, then cursing you to your face, bidding you pray and then blaspheming—dying with hell commenced, with all the horrors of perdition just beginning—a sort of infant perdition strangling to be born within him! Oh, may God deliver you from ever knowing this vilest premonition of destruction! And how shall you be delivered, but by this?

“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, for he who believes and is baptized shall be saved”—so says the Scripture—“He who believes not shall be damned.” Trust Christ and you are saved, be you whom you may! Come to the foot of the Cross and cast yourself where His blood is dropping, and you are saved! Give your heart to Him; believe in Him; repose your confidence in Him! May the Spirit of God enable you to do this! May He help you to repent of sin, and having repented, may He bring you to Christ, as the sin propitiator! And may you go away this day, saying, “I *do* believe in Christ. My soul rests *in Him!*” And if you can say that, the joy and peace in believing, which must follow a simple faith in Christ, shall be to you the work of “the Holy Spirit of promise, and the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession.”

359 THE TABERNACLE – OUTSIDE THE CAMP – EXOD. 33:7

**A Sermon
Delivered on Sabbath Morning, February 10th, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At Exeter Hall, Strand**

“And Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it outside the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the tabernacle of the congregation. And it came to pass, that everyone which sought the LORD went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was outside the camp.” — Exodus 33:7

I HAVE BEEN somewhat perplexed in studying this text, for according to the book of Exodus, the tabernacle—the tabernacle strictly so called—did not exist at the time to which it refers. In the succeeding chapters of this very Book, we have an account of the gifts which were made by the people for the construction of that tabernacle, wherein God dwelt while the children of Israel abode in the wilderness. It seems to me, after looking at the various authorities upon the point, and considering the opinions of those who have well studied it, that when the children of Israel came out of Egypt there may have been some large tent constantly pitched in the center of the camp which had no ark of the covenant in it and probably no altar. The vessels and implements for the service of the sanctuary had not then been made. Not even had the pattern been seen by Moses in the holy mountain. The people may be considered to have been at that time under the patriarchal

dispensation which reaches on, if I understand Scripture aright, until the time of the giving of the law and 40 days beyond that, really—for it was 40 days after the giving of the law, before the ceremonials of Levitical worship were thoroughly established. Moses was 40 days in the mountain receiving instruction as to how the future worship of God should be ordered; that worship had not then begun in its entire glorious splendor—Aaron had not even been ordained a priest. The service of the Levitical dispensation awaited as yet those statutes and ordinances by which its observances were solemnly imposed. Previous to this, as I take it, there was a large tent in the center of the camp set apart for that worship which was common to patriarchal times—for prayer, praise and burnt sacrifices. Now, here God dwelt in the midst of this tabernacle. He was in the center of His people; His cloud overshadowed them by day, and kept off from their heads the burning heat; that cloud was like a luminous atmosphere above them by night, so that probably they could see by night as well as by day. God was in the midst of them—this was their glory and their boast. They had no strange God. The LORD Himself had made their camp the place for His feet, and glorious, indeed, it was! But while Moses had ascended to the mountaintop, the people, who were an unspiritual race, needed something that they could *see*. They needed some visible personification of that spiritual God whom they were unable to worship unless they *saw* Him in type and figure. So they said unto Aaron, “Up, make us gods that shall go before us!” They broke off their earrings and they fashioned there a golden calf, and they said, “These be your gods, O Israel that brought you up out of the land of Egypt.” I do not think that they meant to worship the calf, but they intended to worship Jehovah under the representation of a calf, for it is expressly said in the Word, “Then they proclaimed a feast unto Jehovah,” which shows that even their dancing

around the calf was but a human invention whereby they hoped to honor and to glorify Jehovah. But they vexed the Holy One unto anger, and they grieved His Holy Spirit so that He went forth from the midst of them. He would not acknowledge the camp any more as being the place where He could dwell.

A voice might have been heard in heaven, “Let Us go from here.” The holy God could not abide any longer in the central spot of a camp so defiled by sin! The pillar of cloud moved and Moses bade the proper officers lift up the sacred tent—they carried it up the side of the hill—justice was about to take away from the people the presence of God, but mercy stopped its march! Mercy seemed to say, “Though God cannot abide in the midst of the people, yet He will not go very far from them.” So He stayed upon the hillside, and there was the tabernacle pitched, afar off from the people, but not so far that they could know that God was there; not so far but that they who “sought the Lord” might reach the tabernacle at an easy distance. This, I say was intended to teach the people that God did not recognize their camp as being any longer His dwelling place, because human invention had stained His worship, and laid His honor in the dust.

What use are we to make of this very significant incident? Give heed, brothers and sisters, I beseech you. This is just the position; I take it, of God's tabernacle at the present hour. They who seek the Lord must go out from the camp, and from the congregation, and if they would commune with the Most High, they cannot do it in the camps of even the religious and professing world. They must, like the Master, go forth outside the camp bearing His reproach. The day *will* come in which we shall be able to have fellowship with God in the camp; when the tabernacle of the Lord shall be among men, and He shall dwell *among* them; but that time is not yet. *Now* His tabernacle is out of the camp, and away from men. Those who would

follow Him must be separate, must come out from the masses, must be distinct and set apart in order to be recognized as the sons and the daughters of the Lord God Almighty. There are three points upon which I shall enlarge this morning. The first will be that *outside the camp is the place for true seekers of God*; secondly, that this going forth *from the camp will involve some considerable inconvenience*; and thirdly, I shall earnestly exhort you, as God shall help me, *if you are seeking God*, to take care that you go *outside the camp*, afar off from the camp according to His Word.

I. First, then, they who seek the Lord must, at this day, as in the time of the narrative we have just read, **GO OUTSIDE THE CAMP.**

It is scarcely necessary for me to say that no man can be a true seeker of God who has anything to do with the camp of the *profane*. We must take care that our garments are entirely clean from those lusts of the flesh, and those blasphemies of the ungodly. It will be impossible for you, O seeker, ever to have communion with God while you have fellowship with Belial! You can not go to the synagogue of Satan, and to the synagogue of God at the same time; you will be an arrant fool if you shall attempt it; you will be mad if you shall persevere in the attempt; you will be something *more* than lost if you desire to be saved while you continue in so estranged a state! God will not allow us to do as the old Saxon king did who set up his old gods in one part of the church, and hung up the crucifix in another, hoping that by having two strings to his bow, he might make sure he was safe. Other religions may be tolerant, but the religion of Christ knows no tolerance with regard to error! Before God's ark, Dagon must fall. Dagon may be content for God's ark to stand, if he may stand, too—but the ark of God knows of nothing but an *absolute supremacy for itself, and a total destruction of all other gods*. You must serve God or nothing; no

compromise must be attempted—it will be considered as an audacious blasphemy of God! Come out, then, if you would be saved—come out from the herd of sinners; leave the godless and the Christless generation, for in that camp there will be no possibility of fellowship with God!

Again—we must as much come out from the camp of the *careless*, as from the camp of the profane. The largest company in the world is not that of the profane, but of the thoughtless—not those who *oppose*, but those who *neglect* the great salvation. For every man who is openly an antagonist of truth, there are probably a thousand men who care neither for truth nor error! The Sadducees still remain a very numerous body—men who are content to live as they like, holding really and secretly within them, certain evil thoughts, but still willing to go with the crowd, and to be numbered with the followers of Christ. Ah, if you would see the face of God, my hearer, then come out from among the giddy, thoughtless throng! It is not possible for you to worship Him who bore the cross, while you shall be mingling in the amusements of the world, and toying with the charms of the flesh! Come out from among them—be not numbered with them—let your conduct and conversation distinguish you at once from them! Let it be seen that you, also, are with Jesus of Nazareth. Let none mistake you for a mere bystander, a simple looker-on, but let all know that you are one of His disciples because your speech betrays you! Oh, I do again repeat it—let none think that in the camp of the negligent, the thoughtless, those who count it enough to be moral before man, but who never think of God—let none think that salvation is to be found *there!*

But we must go further than this—if a man would have fellowship with God, he must go even out of the camp of the *merely steady, sedate, and thoughtful*, for there are multitudes whose thoughts are not God's thoughts, and whose ways are not His

ways, who are in every respect conformed outwardly to the laws of God. They rigidly observe the customs of upright society—they *think*, and therefore abhor the trifles of the world—they sit down, and meditate, and therefore understand the hollowness of this present life, but who, notwithstanding, have never learned to set their affections on things *above*. Though they are not as foolish as to think that the shadows of this world are a substance, yet have they never sought eternal realities. You must come out from these, for unless your righteousness exceeds theirs, you shall not be saved! Unless there shall be something more in you than in the merely steady, respectable and outwardly moral, you shall never know the peace-speaking blood of Christ, nor enter into the “rest which remains for the people of God.” Up! Get away from them! It is not enough to leave the Amalekites— you must leave even the hosts of Moab—brother though Moab may seem to be to the Israel of God!

We must draw yet another line, more marked and distinct than this. He who would know anything of God aright must even come out of the camp of the *merely religious*. Look at them—how they go to their church. What for? Frequently to show their finery, and often to be seen of their friends; look how many go to chapel. And why? It is their custom; it is their habit! They sing as God’s people sing; they appear to take a holy delight in the worship of the Most High; they bow as God’s people bow when they pray— they do more—they sit at the Lord’s table, and appear to know somewhat of the joy which that ordinance affords! They come to baptism; they pass through the stream, and yet in how many cases they have a name to live and are dead? Oh, it is one thing to attend to religion, but another thing to be in Christ Jesus! It is one thing to have the name upon the church rolls, but quite another thing to have it written in the Lamb’s book of life! There is not a

church under heaven that is quite pure; with all our care, with all our industry, and watchfulness, we cannot prevent the sad fact! Hypocrites will mingle with the sincere, and the tares will be sown with the wheat—so I suppose it must be, till the reapers come and gather the tares in bundles to burn. I pray you let none of you think that you have taken out a patent for heaven when you have made a profession of your faith in Christ! That profession may be a lie! The conduct which springs from it may be but the result of custom. Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God! “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” And only “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” Do you believe that one-tenth of the religion you see about you is sincere? What do we say, then, to the fact that when investigation has been made as to articles sold at shops, there is scarcely a single article in any trade which is not found to be adulterated? Why is this? If it would be only some men who did this, and they were notorious, we might flatter ourselves that Christians are surely clear. But what if it grows into a custom? When the fact comes out that in the most cases our articles of food are shamefully mixed, and that with poisonous ingredients in some instances, what are we to say? Can that religion which spreads over London—which seems to be adopted by almost everybody—can that be sound while it allows this thing to go on under its cover? And have you not remarked the course of business? How often you must have noticed “astounding failures,” and that, too, of men professedly religious! Do you not sometimes see the most shameful fraudulent bankruptcies, and these are perpetrated by men who have occupied your pews and listened to your ministry?

What does this teach us but that there is more glitter than there is gold, and that there may be much varnish and much paint where there is but little of the sound material of divine

grace? Oh, sirs, if half the religion of England were true religion, we should not be such a people as we now are! Give us but one man out of three of those who profess to be followers of Christ, *sincerely* His, and *thoroughly* His, and how changed would this empire become, and what a different face would all the commercial relations of life bear to the eyes even of outward observers! There is, it must be confessed, much delusion! I believe there is more sound godliness in England than ever there was since she was a nation—but yet, as in the rolling of every chariot, there is a cloud of dust, so is there mixed up with the advance of the Savior’s kingdom, that rolling cloud of dust—hypocrisy and vain pretense. Let us take heed to ourselves, then, that we go forth outside the camp; that we are distinguished and separated, not merely from the irreligious, but from the religious, too—that we are as separate even from the nominal church, as we are from that people who profess not to know the Lord and are therefore cursed!

Here I am stopped by the question, “But in what respect is a Christian to come out from all these, and more especially to come out from the mere professors?” I will tell you, brothers and sisters. There is occasion enough just now for the watchman to sound the notes of warning in your ears. The reasons why the nominal Church at the present time is not the place where the tabernacle is pitched, is that the Church has adulterated the worship of God by the addition of *human ceremonies*. I shall not stay to indicate them, but I believe there is a great proportion of the worship of Christians in these days which are not warranted by the Word of God. We have made an advance beyond its plain letter, and have added to the pure Word of God, inventions of our own. Now, in coming out from the Church, we must leave all ceremonies behind us which are not absolutely taught in the Scriptures! We must shake our garments of every performance, however fair and

admirable it may look, unless it has strictly the letter of divine Inspiration to warrant it. Having done this in a Church capacity, we must then come out from all the doctrines of the church which are not strictly Scriptural. We must leave behind us the dogmas of our creeds, if the creeds are not consistent with the Word of God; we must dare to bear our testimony against all false teaching; we must take care that we share none of the blame of those men who keep back a part of God's Word, and therefore mar their ministry, and spoil its effect upon their hearers. We must come out from all the practices of the Church which are not in accordance with God's Word! We must never plead the precedent of godly men for any act or thought which God Himself has not enjoined. Come right out! You have nothing to do with what even a Christian might tolerate; you are to come straight out from the camp, and taking heed that you swerve not to the right hand or to the left, "follow the Lamb wherever He goes." Take care, too, that you are not actuated by the motives of the nominal Christian. Many nominal Christians have, as the motives of their lives, the maintaining of appearance—the keeping up of the respectable sham of godliness. Your conversation must be in heaven; your motive must be derived from heaven, and your life must be, not in profession, but in reality, "a life of faith upon the Son of God who loved you and gave Himself for you." In conclusion, if you would have true fellowship with Christ, you must come out from the camp and be devoted—your whole spirit, soul and body—entirely in the Lord's strength, perpetually and continually to His service! You must say what many say with the lips, but what few can really feel in the heart, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Nothing short of this will be a true coming out of the camp! Nothing but this will give you that near and intimate relationship and communion with God

after which every believer's soul is panting, and without which it cannot find repose!

II. Having thus tried briefly to describe the truth that outside of the camp is the place for seekers of God, I shall now take the second point—**THIS GOING OUT OF THE CAMP WILL INVOLVE MUCH INCONVENIENCE.**

Some try to get over the inconvenience in the way Joshua did. They think they will come out of the camp altogether and live in the tabernacle, and then, there will be no difficulty. You know, there are many pious minds, a little over-heated with imagination, who think that if they never mix with the world, they could be holy. No doubt they would like to have a building erected in which they could live and pray and sing all day and never go to work, nor have anything at all to do with buying and selling. Thus, they think by going outside the camp, they would become the people of God. In this, however, they mistake the objective of the Christian religion—"I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one." That were an easy, lazy subterfuge for getting rid of the hard task of having *to fight for Christ*—to go out of the battle in order that you may win the victory is a strange method, indeed, of seeking to come off "more than conquerors!" No, no, we must be prepared like Moses, to go *into* the camp and to come *out* of it—always to come out of it when we seek fellowship with God—but still to be in it; to be mixed up with it; to be in the midst of it doing the common acts of man, and yet never being tainted by its infection; and never having the spirit troubled by that will and evil which is so rampant there. I counsel you, not that you should come out of the *world*, but that being in it, you should be so distinctly *not of it* that all men may see that you worship the Father outside the camp of their common association, and their carnal worship.

This will involve many inconveniences. One stands on the outset. *You will find that your timidity and your modesty will sometimes shrink from the performance of duty's stern commands.* If you follow Christ, you must confess Him. The Master desires to have no *secret* disciples; if Christ is worth anything, He is worth confessing boldly before the world, before angels and before devils! "Whoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me, and of My words in this adulterous and pitiful generation; of Him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." You must be able to say emphatically, "I am not ashamed to avow that my heart is given to Jesus the crucified. As He espoused my cause publicly before a gazing world, so I espouse His. His cross have I taken, all else to leave, if it is necessary that I may follow Him. He is my Lord, to Him I will submit; He is my trust, on Him I lean; He is my hope, for Him I look." Do not try the plan which some are attempting—of being Christians in the dark. Put on Christ. You know how the promise is made, "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved." Do not shrink from the second part of the command. If you have believed, profess your faith in baptism; be not ashamed of your Lord and Master. Know you not that the Lord has said, "He who with his heart believes, and with his mouth confesses, shall be saved"? You must make a public confession! I know there is no merit in the *confession*, but still, is it not right?—is it not reasonable? How can you expect the blessing of God if you do not *what* Christ tells you, and do it not *as* Christ tells you? Come out; wear His badge; bear His name and say to the sons of men, "Let others do as they will, as for me and my house, we will, we must serve the Lord."

When you have got over that difficulty—when your reserve has given place to a good confession, and you appear upon the stage of action, you will find that, then, your trouble really begins! Perhaps when you go outside the camp *you will*

lose some of your best friends. Perhaps your mother may say she would not mind your serving Christ, but she wishes that you belonged to her denomination, while you feel that if you serve Christ at all, you must go just where He would have you go, and carry out to the letter all His will. Some of your dearest companions may say, “Well, if you turn religious, certainly our acquaintance must cease; we should never agree, and therefore, we had better part.” And some with whom you have to live will day after day put you to a sort of martyrdom before a slow fire by giving you the trial of cruel ridicule; you will find that many a tie has to be cut when your soul is bound with cords to the horns of the altar. Can you do it? As Christ left His Father for you, can you leave all for Him? Do you know that text, and is it terrible to you—“If a man loves father and mother more than Me, he is not worthy of Me, and if a man loves son or daughter more than Me, he is not worthy of Me”? Are you ready to carry out your convictions come what may? Should you turn back, would that be to rely upon the promise which David uttered—“When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord shall take me up”? You are not fit to be a disciple of Christ if you cannot take the like of this into the cost of following your Savior, and estimate it as a light affliction compared with the eternal weight of glory which shall be given to them who faithfully serve Him, and fully avow themselves His, when others would turn them aside!

You will find, too, when you go outside the camp, *you will have some even professedly godly people against you.* It is one of the sorest trials that I know of in the Christian life to have godly men, themselves, censure you. “Ah,” they will say, when you are filled with the Spirit, and are anxious to serve God as Caleb did, with all your heart—“Ah, young man, that is fanaticism, and it will grow cool, by-and-bye.” When you are called to some good work for your fellow men, they will tell you, “That is too

bold a deed; too daring an act of enthusiasm.” To say—“Whether any will follow me or not, here I go straight to battle and to victory”—this is the prowess of faith, and Christ requires it of every one of you! The godly will follow you, by-and-by, when you succeed, but you must be prepared to go without them sometimes. Look at young David. He knows that he is called to fight with Goliath, but his brothers say, “Because of your pride and the naughtiness of your heart to see the battle, have you come.” But David cares not; he brings back the bloody head of the giant, and there is his refutation of their slander! You do the same. Be prepared to meet with cold-hearted Christians; you will have to stand alone and bear their sneer as well as the sneer of the world; you will have to endure their “judicious” remarks, and bear their sage cautions, and their serious suggestions against your being too bold and too hot. Let none of these things dismay you! Do your Master’s will, and do it thoroughly! Go the whole way with your Lord and Master, and you shall come to be had in reverence of them who sit at the table with you.

There is another inconvenience to which you will most surely be exposed, namely, *that you will be falsely charged*. Some will say, “You make too much of non-essentials.” That is a thing I frequently hear—*non-essentials*! There are certain things in Scripture, they tell us, that are *non-essentials*, and therefore they are not to be taken any notice of. Doctrinal views, and the baptism of believers, for instance—these are non-essential to salvation, and therefore, is the inference which follows according to the theory of some—we may be very careless about them! Do you know believer in Christ, that you are a servant? And what would you think if a servant should first wittingly neglect her duty, and then come to you and tell you that it is non-essential? If she should not light the fire tomorrow morning, and when you came down, she were to say,

“Well, sir, it is non-essential; you won’t die though the fire is not lit”—or if, when she spread the breakfast, there was no provision there but a crust of bread, and nothing for you to drink; what if she should say, “Well, sir, it is non-essential, you know? There is a glass of water for you and a piece of bread—the rest is non-essential.” If you came home and found that the rooms had never been swept, and the dust was upon them, or that the bed had not been made, and that you could not take an easy night’s rest, and the servant should say, “Oh, it is non-essential, sir; it is quite non-essential.” I think you would find it to be non-essential for you to keep her any longer, but extremely essential that you should discharge her! And what shall we say of those men who put aside the words of Christ, and say, “His precepts are quite non-essential”? Why, I think because they *are* non-essential, they therefore become the test of your obedience! If you could be saved by them, and if they were necessary to your salvation, your selfishness would lead you to observe them; but inasmuch as they are not necessary to your salvation, they become tests of your willingness to obey Christ! If the Lord had left a record in His Word—“He who believes and picks up a pebble stone shall be saved,” I dare not neglect to pick up the pebble stone! And if I found that in Holy Scripture there were doctrines, even of less value than the great points of our Christian religion, I should still think it were my duty to bow my judgment, and to turn my intellect to the reception of God’s truth just as God sent it forth! That idea about nonessentials is wicked and rebellious! Cast it from you! Go outside the camp; be particular in every point. To the tiniest jot and tittle, seek to obey your Master’s will, and seek His grace that you may walk in the way of His commandments with a perfect heart.

But then, if you do walk according to this rule, others will say, “*You are so bigoted.*” Thus reply to them—“I am very bigoted

over myself, but I never claim any authority over you. To your own Master *you* stand or fall and *I* do the same.” If it is bigotry to hold decisive views about God’s truth, and to be obedient in every particular, as far as God the Spirit has taught me—if that is bigotry—all hail bigotry! Most hallowed thing! The thing called bigotry is that which inclines one man to bind another’s conscience; the duty of all men is truly the same. But then, I must not make my conscience the standard for another. It must be the standard for *myself*, and *I* am not to violate it—“He who knows his Master’s will and does it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.” Take heed, therefore, that you do His will when you know it. But if another, not knowing His will, should reprove you, be ready to give an answer to him that speaks to you with meekness. But be not harsh with any man. *You* are not his master! Be not stern with those who differ from you, for you are not made the judge of mankind. You are not arbiter of right and wrong. Leave others to be as conscientious as yourself, and believe that a Christian, though he may differ from you, is as much sincere in his difference as you are in your dissent from him. Yet, be careful that no unhallowed charity compels you to lay down the weapons of your warfare; be careful that Satan does not deceive you, and make you charitable to yourself. Be charitable towards every other man, but never to yourself! Forgive every other man the injuries that he does, but forgive not yourself! Weep, lament and sigh before God, and so may He always help you thus to go forth outside the camp.

With one other remark I will leave this point about the inconveniences. If you follow Christ and come outside the camp, *you must expect to be watched*. I have frequently noticed that when a member of our church does anything wrong, people will say, “There is your religion—a horrible thing!” If a person who swears, scrupulously goes to church, nobody thinks anything of it; but if he is a Dissenter—“Oh, it is horrible!”

Well, so it is, I admit. But it shows that people expect those who dissent to be better than those who do not! I only wish their expectation could always be fulfilled. If you profess to go outside the camp, others will look for something extra in you—mind that they are not disappointed. They *ought* to expect it, and I am glad they *do* expect it. I have heard some say, “I do not want to join the church because then there would be so much expected of me.” Just so, and that is the very reason why you should—because their expectation will be a sort of sacred clog to you when you are tempted and may help to give impetus to your character and carefulness to your walk—when you know that you are looked upon by the eyes of men. I wish to have the members of this church carefully watched by the ungodly. If you catch them tripping, notice it. If you see them going into sin, let it be spoken of. God forbid we should wish to conceal it! Let it come out. If we are not what we profess to be, the sooner we are unmasked the better; only do judge us fairly; do judge the life of a professing Christian honestly. Do not expect perfection of him! He does not profess to be perfect, but he does desire to try to keep his Master’s law, and to do to others as he would they should do to him. We would not say to the world, “Shut your eyes.” The eyes of the world are intended to be checks upon the church. The world is the black dog that wakes up Christ’s slumbering sheep. Yes, and sometimes hunts them into the fold when otherwise they would be wandering upon the mountains! Expect to be watched, Christian! In the day when you say, “I will go outside the camp to follow Christ,” expect to be misrepresented; expect that the dogs of this world will bark at you; they always bark at a stranger, and if you are a stranger and a foreigner, they will bark at you. Expect, too, that they will watch your little slips, so let that be a check to you and make you pray each moment, “Lord, hold me up, and I shall be safe.” I would that

there could be trained in all our churches and places of worship, a race of men and women who would be really distinct—as much distinct from the professing church at large, as that church is from the ungodly world itself.

III. Now I come to use certain arguments by which I desire **EARNESTLY TO PERSUADE EACH CHRISTIAN HERE TO GO OUTSIDE THE CAMP, TO BE EXACT IN HIS OBEDIENCE, AND TO BE PRECISE IN HIS FOLLOWING THE LAMB WHEREVER HE GOES.**

I use first a selfish argument—it is to *do it for your own comfort's sake*. If a Christian can be saved while he conforms to this world, at any rate, he will be saved so as by fire. Would you like to go to heaven in the dark, and enter there as a shipwrecked mariner climbs the rocks of his native country? Then, be worldly; be mixed up with the people and remain in the camp. But would you have a heaven below as well as a heaven above? Would you comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths, and know the love of Christ which passes knowledge? And would you have an abundant entrance into the joy of your Lord? Then, come out from among them, and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing! There are many professors, and I trust they are true Christians, too, who are very unhappy—and generally, it is because they are worldly Christians. Oh, we have some members of our church, I trust they are saved, but you know they are as money-getting, and as money-keeping as any men whose portion is in this life! They seem to give as much of their whole force to the world as ever a worldling can, and then they wonder why they are not happy! Why, they have laid up much of their treasure on earth, and the moth has got at it and the rust has corrupted it, and what wonder? Had they put their treasure wholly in heaven, no moth or rust would ever have consumed it. It is our *unspiritual heart* that makes our misery. If we were more Christ-like, we would

have more of Christ's presence, and more of that peace of God which passes understanding. For your own comfort's sake, if you are a Christian, be a Christian and be a marked and distinct one—distinct even from the church at large itself!

But I have a better reason than that, and it is for *your own growth in grace, do it*. If you would have much faith, you cannot have much faith while you are mixed with sinners. If you would have much love, your love cannot grow while you mingle with the ungodly. You may be a babe in grace, but you never can be a perfect man or woman in Christ Jesus while you have anything to do with the worldly maxims, and business and cares of this life. I do not mean while you have to do with them in a right way, but while you mix yourself up with them, and are operated upon by them so as to turn aside from that straight line in which it is the Christian's duty to walk! Little stones in the shoe make a traveler's walk very uncomfortable, and some of these little practices and *little sins*, as some call them, will make your path to heaven very unhappy! You will very seldom be able to *run* in God's ways—you will be a mere creeper! It will be a long while before you will bear the image of Him who created you; you will be a marred vessel—perhaps a vessel meant for honor—but marred upon the wheel—notwithstanding that by your mixing up with the customs of the world and going with the worldly church and with the multitude to do evil.

But let me put it to you in another way. I beseech you Christian men and women, come right out and be your Master's soldiers wholly *for the Church's sake*! It is the few men in the Church, and those who have been distinct from her, who have saved the Church in all times. Who saved the Church in the days of the Reformation? It was *not* the good men who were in the midst of the Church of Rome! There were very many humble curates in villages, and priests here and there, who were

doing their best, I believe, to teach the truth of God. But these men never saved the Church of Christ. She would have gone to ruin for all they did for her! It was Luther, and Calvin, and Zwingli who came right out and said, “No, we will have nothing to do with anti-Christ!” Who saved the Church a hundred years ago? Why, I dare to say, it was not those excellent men who, in their own places of worship were pursuing their holy calling, but it was those who were first called Methodists—Whitefield and Wesley—the men who said, “This cold age will never do; in this absence of the Spirit of God, there can never be a time of blessing to the Church.” It was men looked upon as fanatics, enthusiasts, and heretics who ought to be excommunicated. They came right out as distinct men; as if they were the particular stars of the sky, and they alone cleft the darkness! So must it be with us! There must be some among us who care nothing for this world—who dash worldly laws and customs to the ground, and in the name of God and His Church—and in truth are prepared—though we may be embarrassed and hindered by what is called public opinion—to defy public opinion, and do the right and the true, come what may! And you, too, in your *life* must do what God’s ministers must do both with *tongue* and *life*. If the Church is to be saved, it is not by men *in* her, but by the men who seem to go out even from her to bear Christ’s reproach, and do Him service *outside the camp*.

And *for the world’s sake*, let me beg you to do thus. Let the Church become more and more adulterated with worldliness; let her Christians become more and more conformed to the world; let her lords be cowed down under the bondage and tyranny of worldliness, and what will the Church be worth, and what will the world do? Her salt will have lost its savor, and then the world must rot and putrefy! The Church itself can never be the salt of the world unless there are some particular

men who are the salt of the Church! Do you, then, come out! Be singularly exact in your obedience to Christ; be scrupulously observant of all that He commands; be you distinct from the professing world, and so shall you bless the world through the Church!

And now, lastly, *for your Master's sake*. What have you and I to do in the camp when He was driven from it? What have we to do with hosannas when He was followed with hoots, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" What have I to do in the tent while my Captain lies in the open battlefield? What have we to do to dwell in our ceiled houses, and to be peaceful, and to have the smile of men, while Jesus is hounded to His death and nailed to the accursed cross? By the wounds of Christ, Christian, I beseech you, mortify the flesh with its affections and lusts; by Him who came unto His own, and His own received Him not, expect not to be received even by your own! By Him who was the Heir, and of whom they said, "Let us kill Him," I pray you expect the same treatment from the same world! "Shall the servant be above his Master, or the disciple above his Lord?" If they call the Master of the house, Beelzebub, what should they say of the servant? Are you prepared for silken ease when your Master fought to win the crown? Did He die to *save* you, and will you not be willing to die to *serve* Him? Again I ask it—what have you to do with making love to that world which put Him to death? Dare you hold a parley with the enemy against whom you are sworn to fight? What? Will you be coward enough to ask for peace at the hands of the foe who has reddened himself with Jesus' blood? In the name of God and of His Son, cast down your gauntlet, draw your sword, and throw away its scabbard! The world was never friends with the man that was a friend to Christ! You cannot possibly have its friendship, and smile, and have the fellowship and smile of God, too!

Make your choice, Christian! Make your choice now! Which shall it be—the world or Christ? It cannot be both! Which will you have? Will you be called a right good man, or will you be hissed and pointed at? Will you wear a fool's cap and a fool's coat, and go to heaven, or wear a wise man's gown and go to hell? Will you wear a thorny crown to be saved or a golden crown and be lost? Make your choice, Christians, for one of these two things it must come to! God help us now to say, in the name of Him by whose merit and blood we have been saved—"I do this day take Christ to be my Lord, and come fair or foul—

“Through floods and flames, if Jesus leads,
I'll follow where He goes.”

So be it! So be it, for Christ's sake—that while saved by faith in Jesus—we may *prove* our faith by never shrinking from the trial which that faith necessarily involves! The Lord bless you, for Jesus' sake.

360 ADOPTION – EPH. 1:5

A Sermon
Delivered on Sabbath Evening, February 10th, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At Exeter Hall, Strand

“Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by
Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His
will.” — Ephesians 1:5

IT IS AT ONCE a doctrine of Scripture and of common sense, that whatever God does in time He predestined to do in eternity. Some men find fault with divine predestination and challenge the *justice* of eternal decrees. Now if they remember that predestination is the counterfoil of history, as an architectural plan—the carrying out of which we read in the facts that happen—they may perhaps obtain a slight clue to the unreasonableness of their hostility. I never heard anyone among professors wantonly and willfully find fault with God’s dealings, yet I have heard some who would even dare to call in question the equity of His counsels. If the thing itself is right, it must be right that God intended to do the thing. If you find no fault with facts, as you see them in providence, you have no ground to complain of decrees, as you find them in predestination—for the decrees and the facts are just the counterparts, one of the other! Have you any reason to find fault with God, that He has been pleased to save you and save me? Then why should you find fault because Scripture says he predetermined that He would save us? I cannot see, if the fact

itself is agreeable, why the decree should be objectionable! I can see no reason why you should find fault with God's foreordination if you do not find fault with what actually happens as the effect of it. Let a man but agree to acknowledge an act of providence, and I need to know how he can, except he runs in the very teeth of providence, find any fault with the predestination or intention that God made concerning that providence. Will you blame me for preaching, this morning? Suppose you answer, "No." Then can you blame me that I formed a resolution last night that I would preach? Will you blame me for preaching on this particular subject? Do, if you please, then, and find me guilty for intending to do so; but, if you say I am perfectly right in selecting such a subject, how can you say I was not perfectly right in intending to preach upon it? Assuredly you cannot find fault with God's predestination if you do not find fault with the effects that immediately spring from it! Now we are taught in Scripture, I affirm again, that all things that God chose to do in time, were most certainly intended by Him to be done in eternity, and He predestined such things should be done. If I am called, I believe God intended before all worlds that I should be called; if in His mercy He has regenerated me, I believe that from all eternity He intended to regenerate me! And if in His loving kindness He shall at last perfect me and carry me to heaven, I believe it always was His intention to do so. If you cannot find fault with the thing, itself, that God does, in the name of reason, common sense, and Scripture, how dare you find fault with God's intention to do it?

But, there are one or two acts of God which, while they certainly are decreed as much as other things, yet they bear such a special relation to God's predestination, that it is rather difficult to say whether they were done in eternity or whether they were done in time. *Election* is one of those things which

was done absolutely in eternity; all who were elect, were elect as much in eternity as they are in time. But you may say, “Does the same affirmation apply to *adoption* or *justification*?” My late eminent and now glorified predecessor, Dr. Gill, diligently studying these doctrines, said that adoption was the act of God in eternity, and that as all believers were elect in eternity, so beyond a doubt they were *adopted* in eternity. He went further than that to include the doctrine of justification, and he said that inasmuch as Jesus Christ was before all worlds justified by His Father, and accepted by Him as our representative, therefore all the elect must have been justified in Christ from before all worlds! Now I believe there is a great deal of truth in what he said, though there was a considerable outcry raised against him at the time he first uttered it. However, that being a high and mysterious point, we would have you accept the doctrine that all those who are saved, at last, were elect in eternity when the means as well as the end were determined. With regard to adoption, I believe we were predestined hereunto in eternity, but I think there are some points with regard to adoption which will not allow me to consider the act of adoption to have been completed in eternity. For instance, the positive translation of my soul from a state of nature into a state of grace is a part of adoption, or at least it is an effect of it, and so close an effect that it really seems to be a part of adoption, itself—I believe that this was designed, and in fact that it was virtually carried out in God’s everlasting covenant. I think that it was then actually brought to pass in all its fullness.

So with regard to justification, I must hold that in the moment when Jesus Christ paid my debts, my debts were cancelled—in the hour when He worked out for me a perfect righteousness, it was imputed to me, and therefore I may, as a believer say I was complete in Christ before I was born—accepted in Jesus, even as Levi was blessed in the loins of

Abraham by Melchizedek. But, I know likewise that justification is described in the Scriptures as passing upon me at the time I believe. “Being justified by faith,” I am told, “I have peace with God, through Jesus Christ.” I think, therefore, that adoption and justification, while they have a very great alliance with eternity, and were virtually done then, yet have both of them such a near relation to us in *time*, and such a bearing upon our own personal standing and character, that they have also a part and parcel of themselves actually carried out and performed in time, in the heart of every believer. I may be wrong in this exposition. It requires much more time to study this subject than I have been able yet to give to it, seeing that my years are not yet many. I shall no doubt, by degrees, come to the knowledge more fully of such high and mysterious points of gospel doctrine. But nevertheless, while I find the majority of sound divines holding that the works of justification and adoption are due in our lives, I see, on the other hand, in Scripture much to lead me to believe that both of them were done in eternity. And I think the fairest view of the case is that while they were virtually done in eternity, yet both adoption and justification are actually passed upon us in our proper persons, consciences and experiences, in time—so that both the Westminster confession and the idea of Dr. Gill can be proved to be Scriptural. We may hold them both without any prejudice, the one to the other.

Well now, beloved, leaving then the predestination, let us come to as full a consideration as the hour shall enable us to give of the doctrine of “the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself; according to the good pleasure of His will.”

First, then, adoption—the *grace of God displayed in it*; secondly, adoption—the *privileges which it brings*; thirdly, adoption—the *duties which it necessarily places upon every adopted child*.

I. First, ADOPTION—THE GRACE OF IT.

Adoption is that act of God whereby men, who were by nature the children of wrath, even as others, and were of the lost and ruined family of Adam, are from no reason in themselves, but entirely of the pure grace of God, translated out of the evil and black family of Satan, and brought actually and virtually into the family of God. They take His name, share the privileges of sorts, and they are to all intents and purposes the actual offspring and children of God!

This is an act of pure grace. No man can ever have a right, in himself, to become adopted. If I had, then I should receive the inheritance in my own right—but, inasmuch as I have no right whatever to be a child of God, and can by no possibility claim so high a privilege in and of myself, adoption is the pure gratuitous old covenant, but I could not suppose adoption to be under the Old covenant at all! I could imagine a man keeping the law of God perfectly, and being justified by it, if Adam had not fallen. But, even upon such a supposition, Adam himself would have had no right to *adoption*—he would still have been only a servant, and not a son. Above all contradiction and controversy that great and glorious act whereby God makes us of His family and unites us to Jesus Christ as our covenant head, so we may be His children—is an act of pure grace! It would have been an act of sovereign grace if God had adopted someone out of the best of families, but in this case He has adopted one who was a child and a rebel! We are by nature the children of one who was convicted of high treason; we are all the heirs, and are born into the world the natural heirs of one who sinned against his Maker, who was a rebel against his Lord. Yet mark this—notwithstanding the evil of our parentage, born of a thief, who stole the fruit from his Master's garden—born of a proud traitor, who dared to rebel against his God—notwithstanding all this—God has put us into the family! We can well conceive that when God considered our vile original,

He might have said within Himself, “How can I put you among the children?” With what gratitude should we remember that though we were of the very lowest original, grace has put us into the number of the Savior’s family! Let us give all thanks to the Free grace which overlooked the hole of the pit from where we were dug, and which passed over the quarry from where we were hewn, and put us among the chosen people of the living God! If a king should adopt any into his family, it would likely be the son of one of his lords—at any rate some child of respectable parentage; he would not take the son of some common felon, or some gypsy child, to adopt him into his family. But God in this case has taken the very worst to be His children! The sons of God all confess that they are the last persons they would ever have dreamed He would have chosen. They say of themselves—

“What was there in us that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?
‘It was even so, Father,’ we ever must sing,
‘Because it seemed good in Your sight.’”

Again, let us think not only of our original lineage, but of our personal character. He who knows himself will never think that he had much to recommend him to God. In other cases of adoption, there usually is some recommendation. A man, when he adopts a child, sometimes is moved thereto by its extraordinary beauty, or at other times by its intelligent manners, and winning disposition. But, beloved, when God passed by the field in which we were lying, He saw no tears in our eyes till He put them there Himself! He saw no contrition in us until He had given us repentance; there was no beauty in us that could induce Him to adopt us—on the contrary we were everything that was repulsive! And if He had said, when He

passed by, “You are cursed, be lost forever,” it would have been nothing but what we might have expected from a God who had been so long provoked and whose majesty had been so terribly insulted! But no, though He found a rebellious child, a filthy, frightful, ugly child, He took it to His bosom and said, “Black though you are, you are comely in My eyes through My Son, Jesus. Unworthy though you are, yet I cover you with His robe, and in your Brother’s garments, I accept you.” And taking us, all unholy and unclean, just as we were, He took us to be His—His children—His forever! I was passing lately by the seat of a nobleman, and someone in the railway carriage observed that he had no children and he would give any price in the world if he could find someone who would renounce all claim to any son he might have. The child was never to speak to his parents any more, nor to be acknowledged, and this lord would adopt him as his son and leave him the whole of his estates. But he had found great difficulty in procuring any parents who would forswear their relationship and entirely give up their child. Whether this was correct or not, I cannot tell, but certainly this was not the case with God. His only-begotten and well-beloved Son was quite enough for Him! And if He had needed a family, there were the angels and His own Omnipotence was adequate enough to have created a race of beings far superior to us! He stood in no need whatever of any to be His darlings. It was, then, an act of simple, pure, gratuitous grace—and of nothing else—because He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and because He delights to show the marvelous character of His condescension. Did you ever think what a high honor it is to be called a son of God? Suppose a judge of the land should have before him some traitor who was about to be condemned to die? Suppose that equity and law demanded that the wretch should shed his blood by some terrible punishment? But, suppose it were possible for the judge to step from his

throne, and to say, “Rebel, you are guilty, but I have found out a way whereby I can forgive your rebellions—man, you are pardoned!” There is a flush of joy upon his cheeks. “Man, you are made rich; see, there is wealth!” Another smile passes over the countenance. “Man, you are made so strong that you shall be able to resist all your enemies!” He rejoices again. “Man,” says the judge at last, “you are made a prince! You are adopted into the royal family, and you shall one day wear a crown! You are now as much the son of God, as you are the son of your own father.” You can conceive the poor creature fainting with joy at such a thought, that he whose neck was just ready for the halter, should have his head now ready for a crown—that he who expected to be clothed in the felon’s garb and taken away to death, is now to be exalted and clothed in robes of honor! So, Christian, think what you did deserve—robes of shame and infamy—but you are to have those of glory. Are you in God’s family now? Well said the poet—

“It does not yet appear,
How great we must be made.”

We do not know the greatness of adoption yet. Yes, I believe that even in eternity we shall scarcely be able to measure the infinite depth of the love of God in that one blessing of “adoption by Jesus Christ unto Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.”

Still, I think there is someone here who says, “I believe, sir, that men are adopted because God foresees that they will be holy, righteous and faithful, and therefore, doubtless, God adopted them on the foresight of that.” That is an objection I often have to reply to. Suppose, my friends, you and I should take a journey into the country one day, and should meet with a person and should say to him, “Sir, can you tell me why the

sails of yonder windmill go round?” He would of course reply, “It is the wind.” But, suppose you were to ask him, “What makes the wind?” and he were to reply, “The sails of the windmill,” would you not just think that he was an idiot? In the first place, he told you that the wind caused the revolution of the sails and then, afterwards, he tells you that the sails make the wind—that an effect can be the parent of that which is its own cause! Now, any man you like to ask will say that faith is the gift of God—that good works are God’s workmanship. Well, then, what is the cause of good works in a Christian? “Why, grace,” they say! Then, how can good works be the cause of grace? By all that is rational, where are your heads? It is too foolish a supposition for any man to reply to without making you laugh, and that I do not choose to do. And therefore, I leave it. I say again, beloved, if the fruits upon a Christian are caused by the root, how can the fruit, in any degree, be the cause of the root? If the good works of any man are given him by grace, how can they, by any pretense whatever, be argued as the reason why God gives him grace? The fact is, we are by nature utterly lost and ruined, and there is not a saint in heaven who would not have been damned—and who did not *deserve* to be damned in the common doom of sinners! The reason why God has made a distinction is a secret to Himself; He had a right to make that distinction if He pleased, and He has done it. He has chosen some unto eternal life, to the praise of His glorious grace; He has left others to be punished for their sins, to the praise of His glorious Justice and in one, as in the other, He has acted quite rightly, for He has a right to do as He wills with His own creatures! Seeing they all deserved to be punished, He has a right to punish them all! So too, as He has reconciled justice with mercy or mated it with judgment; He has a right to forgive and pardon some, and to leave the others to be unwashed, unforgiven and unsaved—willfully to follow the

error of their ways, to reject Christ, despise His gospel, and ruin their own souls. He that does not agree with that, agrees not with Scripture! I have not to prove it—I have only to preach it! He that quarrels with that, quarrels with God—let him fight his quarrel out himself!

II. The second thing is, THE PRIVILEGES WHICH COME TO US THROUGH ADOPTION.

For the convenience of my young people—members of the church—I shall, just for a moment, give you a list of the privileges of adoption as they are to be found in our old *Confession of Faith*. I know many of you have this book, and I am sure most of you will study at home this afternoon if you have opportunity, looking up all the passages. It is the Twelfth Article, upon adoption, where we read—“All those who are justified, God vouchsafed, in and for the sake of His only Son, Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption, by which they are taken into the number and enjoy the liberties and privileges of children of God, have His name put upon them, receive the spirit of adoption, have access to the throne of grace with boldness, are enabled to cry Abba, Father, are pitied, protected, provided for and chastened by Him as a Father, yet never cast off, but sealed to the day of redemption and inherit the promises as heirs of everlasting salvation.”

I shall commence, then, with the privileges of adoption. There is one privilege not mentioned in the Confession which ought to be there. It is this—when a man is adopted into a family, and comes thereby under the regime of his new father, he has nothing whatever to do with the old family he has left behind, and he is released from subjection to those whom he has left. And so, the moment I am taken out of the family of Satan, the Prince of this world has nothing to do with me as my father and he is no more my father! I am not a son of Satan! I am not a child of wrath! The moment I am taken out of the

legal family, I have nothing whatever to do with Hagar. If Hagar comes to meddle with me, I tell her, “Sarah is my mother, Abraham is my father and, Hagar, you are my servant, and I am not yours. You are a bondwoman and I shall not be your bond slave, for you are mine.” When the law comes to a Christian with all its terrible threats, and horrible denunciations, the Christian says, “Law! Why do you threaten *me*? I have nothing to do with you. I follow you as my rule, but I will not have you to be my ruler; I take you to be my pattern and mold, because I cannot find a better code of morality, and of life, but I am not under you as my condemning curse. Sit in your judgment seat, O law, and condemn me; I smile on you, for you are not my judge, I am not under your jurisdiction! You have no right to condemn me.” If, as the old divines say, the king of Spain were to condemn an inhabitant of Scotland, what would he say? He would say, “Very well, condemn me, if you like, but I am not under your jurisdiction.” So, when the law condemns a saint, the saint says, “If my father condemns me, and chastens me, I bow to Him with filial submission, for I have offended Him, but, O law, I am not under you any longer; I am delivered from you; I will not hear your sentence, nor care about your thunders! All you can do against me go and do it upon Christ! Or, rather, you have done it. If you demand punishment for my sin, look, there stands my substitute; you are not to seek it at my hands. You charge me with guilt. It is true, I am guilty, but, it is equally true my guilt is put upon the Scapegoat’s head! I tell you, I am not of your family; I am not to be chastened by you; I will not have a legal chastisement, a legal punishment; I am under the gospel dispensation, now, I am not under you. I am a child of God, not your servant. We have a commandment to obey the Father who we now have; but as to the family with which we were connected, we have nothing to do with it any longer.” That is no small privilege—oh that we could rightly understand

it and appreciate it, and walk in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free!

But now, as the *Confession* has it, one of the great blessings which God gives us is that we have His name put upon us. He will give unto us a new name, as is the promise in the book of the Revelation. We are to be called after the name of God. Oh, remember, brothers and sisters, we are men and women, but we are now God's men and women! We are no longer mere mortals; we are so in ourselves—but by divine grace we are chosen immortals—God's sons, God's daughters taken to Himself! Remember, Christian, you bear the name of God upon you!

Mark another thing. We have the spirit of children as well as the name of children. Now, if one man adopts another child into his family, he cannot give it his own nature, as his own child would have had. And if that child who he shall adopt should have been a fool, it may still remain so—he cannot make it a child worthy of him. But, our heavenly Father, when He comes to carry out adoption, gives us not only the name of children, but the *nature* of children, too! He gives us a nature like His well-beloved Son, Jesus Christ. We had once a nature like our father, Adam, after he had sinned. God takes that away and gives us a nature like Himself, as it were, “in the image of God.” He overcomes the old nature, and He puts in us the nature of children. “He sends forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” And He gives us the nature and the character of children, so that, we are as much by grace partakers of the spirit of children of God, as we would have been if we had been His legitimately born children, and had not been adopted into His family! Brothers and sisters, adoption secures to us regeneration; and regeneration secures to us the nature of children whereby we are not only made children, but are made partakers of the grace of God—so that

we are in ourselves, made unto God by our new nature as living children, actually and really like Himself!

The next blessing is that being adopted we have access to the throne. When we come to God's throne, one thing we ought always to plead is our adoption. The angel that keeps the mercy seat might stop us on the road with saying, "What is your claim to come here? Do you come as a subject, or a servant? If you do, you have no right to come; but, if you come as a son, come and welcome." Can you say you are a son in your prayers, Christian? Then never be afraid to pray! So long as you know your sonship you will be sure to get all you need, for you can say, "Father, I ask not as a servant. If I were a servant I would expect Your wages, and knowing that as a servant I have been rebellious, I would expect wages of eternal Wrath. But I am Your son. Though as a servant I have often violated Your rules, and may expect Your rod, yet, O Father, sinner though I am, in and of myself, I am Your son by adoption and grace. Spurn me not away; put me not from Your knee; I am Your own child; I plead it! The Spirit bears witness with my Spirit that I am born of God. Father, will You deny Your son?" What? When you plead for your elder brother's sake, by which you are God's child, being made an heir with Christ of all things, will He drive away His son? No, beloved, He will not! He will turn again; He will hear our prayer; He will have mercy upon us. If we are His children, we may have access with boldness to the grace wherein we stand, and access with confidence unto the throne of the heavenly grace!

Another blessing is that we are pitied by God. Think of that, children, in all your sufferings and sorrows. "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them who fear Him." Do you lie sick? The Lord stands by your bedside, pitying you. Are you tempted of Satan? Christ is looking down upon you, feeling in His heart your sighs, and your groans. Did you come

here this morning with a heavy heart, a desponding spirit? Remember, the loving heart of God sympathizes with you! In His measure, Christ feels afresh what every member bears; He pities you, and that pity of God is one of the efforts that flows into your heart by your adoption.

In the next place, He protects you. Just as a hen protects her brood under her feathers from birds of prey that seek their life, so the Lord makes His own loving arms encircle His children. No father will allow his son to die without making some attempt to resist the adversary who would slay him. God will never allow His children to perish while His omnipotence is able to guard them. If once that everlasting arm can be palsied; if once that everlasting hand can become less than Almighty, then you may die; but while your Father lives, your Father's shield shall be your preserver, and His strong arm shall be your effectual protection.

Once again, there is provision as well as protection. Every father will take care to the utmost of his ability to provide for his children. So will God. If you are adopted, being predestinated thereunto, most surely will He provide for you—

“All necessary grace will God bestow,
And crown that grace with glory, too;
He gives us all things and withholds
No real good from upright souls.”

Mercies temporal, mercies spiritual you shall have, and all because you are God's child, His redeemed child, made so by the blood of Jesus Christ.

And then you shall likewise have education. God will educate all His children till He makes them perfect in Christ Jesus. He will teach you doctrine after doctrine. He will lead you into all His truths, until at last, perfected in all heavenly

wisdom, you shall be made fit to join with your fellow commoners in the great heaven above.

There is also one thing, perhaps, you sometimes forget which you are sure to have in the course of discipline if you are God's children, and that is God's rod. That is another fruit of adoption. Unless we have the rod, we may tremble, fearing that we are not the children of God. God is no foolish father—if He adopts a child; He adopts it that He may be a kind and wise Father. And though He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men for nothing—though when His strokes are felt, His strokes are fewer than our crimes and lighter than our guilt—yet at the same time He never spares the rod. He knows He would ruin His children if He did, and therefore He lays it on with no very sparing hand, and makes them cry out and groan while they think that He is turned to be their enemy.

But, as the *Confession* beautifully has it, exactly in keeping with Scripture, "Though chastened by God as by a father, yet never cast off, but sealed to the day of redemption, they inherit the promises, as heirs of salvation." It is one great doctrine of Scripture that God cannot, as well as will not, cast off His children! I have often wondered how any persons can see any consistency in Scripture phraseology when they talk about God's people being children of God one day, and children of Satan the next. Now, it would startle me not a little, if I should step into a lecture room, and hear the lecturer asserting that my children might be my children today and his children the next. I should look at him and say, "I don't see that. If they are really mine, they are mine. If they are not mine they are not mine, but I do not see how they can be mine, today, and yours tomorrow." The fact is that those who preach thus *do* believe in *salvation by works*—though they mask and cover it with specious qualifications as much as they may. There is as much need for a Luther to come out against them as there was for him to come

out against the Romanists! Ah, beloved, it is well to know that our standing is not of that character, but, if we are children of God nothing can unchild us—though we are beaten and afflicted as children, we shall never be punished by being cast out of the family, and ceasing to be His children. God knows how to keep His own children from sin; He will never give them liberty to do as they please. He will say to them, “I will not kill you—that were an act I could not do—but this rod shall smite you; and you shall be made to groan and cry under the rod”—so that you will hate sin and you will cleave to Him and walk in holiness even to the end. It is not a licentious doctrine because there is the rod. If there were no rod of chastisement, then it would be a daring thing to say that God’s children shall go unpunished! They shall, so far as legal penalty is concerned. No judge shall condemn them; but, as far as paternal chastisement is concerned, they shall not escape. “I have loved you above all the nations of the earth,” says God, “and therefore I will punish you for your iniquities.”

Lastly, as sure as we are the children of God by adoption, we must inherit the promise that pertains to it. “If children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.” “If we suffer with Him, we shall also be glorified together.”

III. And now, the final point—THERE ARE SOME DUTIES WHICH ARE CONNECTED WITH ADOPTION.

When the believer is adopted into the Lord’s family, there are many relationships which are broken off—the relationship with old Adam and the law ceases at once. But then, he is under a new law, the law of grace—under new rules and under a new covenant. And now, I beg to admonish you of duties, children of God! Because you are God’s children, it has then become your duty to obey God. A servile spirit you have nothing to do with; you are a *child*. And inasmuch as you are a child, you are bound to obey your Father’s faintest wish—the least intimation

of His will. What does He say to you? Does He bid you fulfill such-and-such an ordinance? It is at your peril if you neglect it! Then you are disobeying your Father who tells you to do so! Does He command you to seek the image of Jesus? Seek it. Does He tell you, “Be you perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect”? Then not because the law says so, but because your Father says so, seek after it! Seek to be perfect in love and in holiness. Does He tell you to love one another? Love one another! Not because the law says, “Love your God,” but because Christ says, “If you love Me, keep My commandments. And this is the commandment that I give unto you, that you love one another.” Are you told to distribute to the poor, and minister unto the necessity of saints? Do it not because you think you are bound by the law to do it, but do it because Christ says so— because He is your Elder Brother— He is the Master of the household, and you think yourself most sweetly bound to obey. Does it say, “Love God with all your heart”? Look at the commandment and say, “Ah, commandment, I will seek to fulfill you. Christ has fulfilled you already—I have no need, therefore, to fulfill you for my salvation, but I will strive to do it because He is my Father, now, and He has a new claim upon me.” Does He say, “Remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy”? I shall remember what Jesus said— “The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath,” and therefore I shall not be the Sabbath’s slave. But, as inasmuch as my Father rested on the seventh day, so also will I from all my works, and I will have no works of legality to defile His *Rest*; I will do as many acts of mercy as ever I can; I will seek and strive to serve Him with filial homage. Because my Father rested, so will I in the finished work of Christ, and so with each of the ten commandments. Take them out of the law; put them in the gospel, and then obey them. Do not obey them simply as being the law engraved on tablets of stone—

obey them as gospel written on fleshy tablets of the heart—
“for you are not under the law, but under grace.”

There is another duty, believer. It is this—if God is your Father, and you are His child, you are bound to trust Him. Oh, if He were only your Master, and you ever so poor a servant, you would be bound to trust Him! But when you know that He is your Father, will you ever doubt Him? I may doubt any man in this world, but I do not doubt my father. If he says a thing, if he promises a thing—I know if it is in his power, he will do it. And if he states a fact to me, I cannot doubt his word. And yet, O child of God, how often do you mistrust your *heavenly* Father? Do so no more! Let Him be true; let every man be a liar—still doubt not your Father. What? Could He tell you a lie? Would He cheat you? No, your Father, when He speaks, means what He says. Can you not trust His love? What? Will He let you sink while He is able to keep you afloat? Will He let you starve while His granaries are full? Will He let you die of thirst when His presses burst with new wine? Are the cattle upon a thousand hills His, and will He let you lack a meal? Is the earth the Lord's and the fullness thereof, and will He let you go away empty and poor, and miserable? Oh, surely not! Is all grace His, and will He keep it back from you? No, He says to us today, “Son, you are always with Me, and all that I have is yours. Take what you will, it is all your own.” But trust to your Father—

“Leave to His sovereign will,
To choose and to command.
With wonder filled, you then shall know,
How wise, how strong His hand.”

Now go away, heirs of heaven, with light feet, and with joy in your countenances, saying you know that you are His children, and that He loves you, and will not cast you away!

Believe that to His bosom He now presses you—that His heart is full of love to you! Believe that He will provide for you, protect you, sustain you, and that He will at last bring you to a glad inheritance when you shall have perfected the years of your pilgrimage and shall be ripe for bliss! “As He has predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.”

I need not this morning delay you any longer in personally addressing unconverted persons. Their welfare I always seek. I have sought, while speaking to the saints this morning, so to speak that every sinner may learn at least this one fact—*salvation is of God alone*—and that he may be brought into this state of mind—to feel that if he is saved—God must save him, or else he cannot be saved at all! If any of you acknowledge that truth, then in God’s name I now bid you believe in Jesus, for as surely as ever you can feel that God has a right to save or to destroy you, grace must have made you feel that, and therefore you now have a right to come and believe in Jesus! If you know that, you know all that will make you feel empty, and therefore you have enough to make you cast your entire hope upon that fullness which is in Jesus Christ.

The Lord bless you and save you! Amen.

361 NONE BUT JESUS, PT. 1 – JOHN 3:18

**A Sermon
Delivered on Sabbath Morning, February 17th, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At Exeter Hall, Strand**

“He who believes on Him is not condemned.” — John 3:18

THE WAY OF SALVATION is stated in Scripture in the very plainest forms and yet, perhaps, there is no truth about which more errors have been uttered than concerning the faith which saves the soul. Well has it been proved by experience that all doctrines of Christ are mysteries—mysteries not so much in themselves, but because they are hid to them who are lost, in whom the God of this world has blinded their eyes. So plain is Scripture that one may say, “He who runs may read,” but so dim are man’s eyes, and so marred is his understanding, that he distorts and misrepresents the very simplest truth of Scripture. And indeed, my brothers and sisters, even those who know what faith is—personally and experimentally—do not always find it easy to give a good definition of it. They think they have hit the mark, and then, afterwards, they lament that they have failed. Straining themselves to describe some one part of faith, they find they have forgotten another, and in the excess of their earnestness to clear the poor sinner out of one mistake, they often lead him into another! So that I think I may say, while faith is the simplest thing in the entire world, yet it is one of the most difficult upon which to preach, because from its very

importance, our soul begins to tremble while speaking of it, and then, we are not able to describe it so clearly as we would.

I intend this morning, by God's help, to put together sundry thoughts upon faith, each of which I may have uttered in your hearing at different times, but which have not been collected into one sermon before, and which, I have no doubt, have been misunderstood from the need of their having been put together in their proper consecutive order. I shall speak a little on each of these points, first, *the objective of faith*, to what it looks; next, *the reason of faith*, from where it comes; thirdly, *the ground of faith*, or what it wears when it comes; fourthly, *the warrant of faith*, or why it dares to come to Christ; and fifthly, *the result of faith*, or, how it speeds when it does come to Christ.

I. First, then, **THE OBJECTIVE OF FAITH**, or to what faith looks.

I am told in the Word of God to believe—what am I to believe? I am bid to look—to what am I to look? What is to be the objective of my hope, belief and confidence? The reply is simple. The objective of faith to a sinner is Christ Jesus! How many make a mistake about this, and think that they are to believe on *God the Father*! Now, belief in God is an after-result of faith in Jesus. We come to believe in the eternal love of the Father as the result of trusting the precious blood of the Son. Many men say, "I would believe in Christ if I knew that I was elect." This is coming to the Father, and no man can come to the Father except by Christ. It is the Father's work to elect—you cannot come directly to Him—therefore, you cannot know your election until first you have believed on Christ the Redeemer! And then, through redemption, you can approach the Father and know your election. Some, too, make the mistake of looking to the work of God *the Holy Spirit*. They look within to see if they have certain feelings, and if they find them, their faith is strong—but if their feelings have departed from

them, then their faith is weak, so that they look to the work of the Spirit which is not the objective of a sinner's faith. Both the Father and the Spirit must be trusted in order to complete redemption—but for the particular mercy of justification and pardon, the blood of the Mediator is the only plea! *Christians* have to trust the Spirit after conversion, but the sinner's business, if he would be saved, is not with trusting the Spirit, nor with looking to the Spirit, but looking to Christ Jesus, and to Him alone! I know your salvation depends on the whole Trinity, but yet the first and immediate objective of a sinner's justifying faith is neither God the Father, nor God the Holy Spirit, but God the Son, incarnate in human flesh and offering atonement for sinners! Have you the eyes of faith? Then, soul, look to *Christ as God*; if you would be saved, believe Him to be God over all, blessed forever. Bow before Him, and accept Him as being "Very God of very God." If you do not, you have no part in Him! When you have thus believed, believe in Him as *man*. Believe the wondrous story of His incarnation; rely upon the testimony of the evangelists who declare that the Infinite was robed in the infant, that the Eternal was concealed within the mortal; that He who was King of heaven became a servant of servants and the Son of man! Believe and admire the mystery of His incarnation, for unless you believe this, you cannot be saved. Then, especially, if you would be saved, let your faith behold Christ in His *perfect righteousness*. See Him keeping the law without blemish, obeying His Father without error, preserving His integrity without flaw. All this you are to consider as being done on your behalf. *You* could not keep the law—He kept it for you. You could not obey God perfectly—His obedience stands in the place of your obedience—by it you are saved! But take care that your faith mainly fixes itself upon Christ as *dying, and as dead*. View the Lamb of God as dumb before His shearers; view Him as the man of sorrows and

acquainted with grief; go with Him to Gethsemane, and behold Him sweating drops of blood. Mark, your faith has nothing to do with anything within yourself—the objective of your faith is nothing within you—but a something outside you. Believe on Him then, who on yonder tree with nailed hands and feet pours out His life for sinners! There is the objective of your faith for justification; not in yourself, nor in anything which the Holy Spirit has done in you, or anything He has promised to do for you, but you are to look to Christ and to Christ Jesus alone! Then, let your faith behold Christ *rising from the dead*. See Him—He has borne the curse, and now He receives the justification. He dies to pay the debt; He rises that He may nail the handwriting of that discharged debt to the cross! See Him ascending up on high, and behold Him this day pleading before the Father's throne. He is there pleading for His people—offering up, today, His authoritative petition for all who come to God by Him! And He, as God, as man, as living, as dying, as rising, and as reigning above—He, and He alone, is to be the objective of your faith for the pardon of sin!

On nothing else must you trust; He is to be the only prop and pillar of your confidence; and all you add thereunto will be a wicked antichrist, a rebellion against the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus. But take care that your faith saves you, that while you look to Christ in all these matters, you view Him as being a *substitute*. This doctrine of substitution is so essential to the whole plan of salvation, that I must explain it here for the thousandth time! God is just, He must punish sin. God is merciful, He wills to pardon those who believe in Jesus. How is this to be done? How can He be just, and exact the penalty—merciful—and accept the sinner? He does it thus—He takes the sins of His people, and actually lifts them up from off His people to Christ, so that they stand as innocent as though they had never sinned, and Christ is looked upon, by God, as though

He had been all the sinners in the world rolled into one! The sin of His people was taken from their persons, and really and actually, not typically and metaphorically, but really and actually, laid on Christ! Then, God came forth with His fiery sword to meet the sinner, and to punish Him. He met Christ. Christ was not a sinner, Himself, but the sins of His people were all imputed to Him. Justice, therefore, met Christ as though He had been the sinner—punished Christ for His people's sins—punished Him as far as its rights could go—exactd from Him the last atom of the penalty, and left not a dreg in the cup! And now, he who can see Christ as being his substitute, and puts his trust in Him, is thereby delivered from the curse of the law! Soul, when you see Christ obeying the law—your faith is to say, “He obeys that for His people.” When you see Him dying, you are to count the purple drops, and say, “Thus He took my sins away.” When you see Him rising from the dead, you are to say—“He rises as the head and representative of all His elect;” and when you see Him sitting at the right hand of God, you are to view Him there as the pledge that all for whom He died shall sit at the Father's right hand! Learn to look on Christ as being in God's sight, as though He were the sinner. “In Him was no sin.” He was “*the just*,” but He suffered for the unjust! He was the righteous, but He stood in the place of the unrighteous—and all that the unrighteous ought to have endured, Christ has endured once and for all, and put away their sins forever by the sacrifice of Himself! Now this is the great objective of faith. I pray you; do not make any mistake about this, for a mistake here will be dangerous, if not fatal! View Christ, by your faith, as being in His life and death, and sufferings and resurrection, the substitute for all whom His Father gave Him—the vicarious sacrifice for the sins of all those who will trust Him with their souls. Christ, then, thus set forth, is the objective of justifying faith!

Now, let me further remark that there are some of you, no doubt, saying—“Oh, I should believe, and I should be saved if”—if what? If Christ had died? “Oh no, sir, my doubt is nothing about Christ.” I thought so. Then what is the doubt? “Why, I would believe *if I felt this, or if I had done that.*” I know. But I tell you, you could not believe in Jesus if you felt that, or if you had done that, for then you would believe in *yourself* and not in Christ! That is the English of it! If you were so-and-so, or so-and-so, then you could have confidence. Confidence in what? Why, confidence in your *feelings*, and confidence in your *doings*, and isn’t that the contrary of confidence in Christ? Faith is not to infer from something good within *me* that I shall be saved, but it is to say that, despite the fact that I am guilty in the sight of God, and deserve His wrath, yet I do, nevertheless, believe that the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses me from all sin! And though my present consciousness condemns me, yet my faith overpowers my consciousness, and I believe that, “He is able to save to the uttermost them who come unto God by Him.” To come to Christ as a saint is very easy work. To trust a doctor to cure you when you believe you are getting better, is very easy. But to trust your physician when you feel as if the sentence of death were in your body; to bear up when the disease is rising into the very skin, and when the ulcer is gathering its venom—to believe even *then* in the efficacy of the medicine—that is *faith*. And so, when sin gets the mastery of you—when you feel that the law condemns you—then, even then, as a *sinner*, to trust Christ—this is the most daring feat in all the world—and the faith which shook down the walls of Jericho! The faith which raised the dead—the faith which stopped the mouths of libels—was not greater than that of a poor sinner, when in the teeth of all his sins, he dares to trust the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ! Do this, soul, and then you are saved whoever you may be! The objective of faith,

then, is Christ as the substitute for sinners. God in Christ, but not God apart from Christ, nor any work of the Spirit, but the work of Jesus alone must be viewed by you as the foundation of your hope.

II. And now, secondly, **THE REASON OF FAITH**, or why does any man believe, and from where does his faith come?

“Faith comes by *hearing*.” Granted, but do not all men hear, and do not many still remain unbelieving? How, then, does any man come by his faith? To his own experience his faith comes as the result of *a sense of need*. He feels himself needing a Savior. He finds Christ to be just such a Savior as he needs, and therefore, because he cannot help himself, he believes in Jesus. Having nothing of his own, he feels he must take Christ or else perish, and therefore he does it because he cannot help doing it. He is fairly driven up into a corner, and there is but this one way of escape, namely, by the righteousness of another. He feels he cannot escape by any good deeds, or sufferings of his own and he comes to Christ and humbles himself, because he cannot do without Christ, and must perish unless he lays hold of Him. But to carry the question further back, where does that man get his sense of need? How is it that *he*, rather than others, feels his need of Christ? It is certain he has no more necessity for Christ than other men; how does he come to know, then, that he is lost and ruined? How is it that he is driven by the sense of ruin to take hold on Christ the restorer? The reply is—this is *the gift of God*; this is the work of the Spirit! No man comes to Christ except the Spirit draws him, and the Spirit draws men to Christ by shutting them up under the law to a conviction that if they do not come to Christ, they must perish! Then by sheer stress of weather, they tack about and run into this heavenly port! Salvation by Christ is so disagreeable to our carnal mind, so inconsistent with our love of human merit, that we would never take Christ to be our all-in-all, if the Spirit did

not convince us that we were nothing at all, and did not so compel us to lay hold on Christ!

But then, the question goes still further back—how is it that the Spirit of God teaches some men their need, and not other men? Why is it that some of you were driven by your sense of need to Christ, while others go on in their self-righteousness, and perish? There is no answer to be given but this, “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.” It comes to divine sovereignty at the last! The Lord has “hidden those things from the wise and prudent, and has revealed them unto babes.” According to the way in which Christ put it—“My sheep hear My voice.” “You believe not because you are not of My sheep, as I said unto you.” Some divines would like to read that—“You are not My sheep, because you do not believe,” as if believing made us the sheep of Christ! But the text puts it—“You *believe not*, because you are not of My sheep.” “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me.” If they come not, it is a clear proof that they were never *given*; for those who were given of old eternity to Christ, chosen by God the Father, and then redeemed by God the Son—these are led by the Spirit through a sense of need to come and lay hold on Christ! No man yet ever did or ever will believe in Christ unless he feels his need of Him! No man ever did or will *feel his need* of Christ unless the Spirit makes him feel, and the Spirit will make no man feel his need of Jesus savingly unless it is so written in that eternal book—in which God has surely engraved the names of His elect! So then, I think I am not to be misunderstood on this point—that the reason of faith—or why men believe, is God’s electing love working through the Spirit by a sense of need, and so bringing them to Christ Jesus!

III. But now I shall need your careful attention while I come to another point upon which you, perhaps, will think I contradict myself, and that is—**THE GROUND OF THE**

SINNER'S FAITH—or on what ground does he dare to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ?

My dear friends, I have already said that no man will believe in Jesus unless he feels his need of Him. But you have often heard me say, and I repeat it again, that I do not come to Christ pleading that I feel my need of Him; my reason for believing in Christ, is not that I *feel* my need of Him, but that I *have* a need of Him! The ground on which a man comes to Jesus is not as a *sensible* sinner, but as a sinner, and nothing but a sinner! He will not come unless he is awakened, but when he comes, he does not say, "Lord, I come to you because I am an awakened sinner, save me." But he says, "Lord, I am a sinner, save me." Not his awakening, but his *sinnerness*, is the method and plan upon which he dares to come! You will, perhaps, perceive what I mean, for I cannot exactly explain myself just now. If I refer to the preaching of a great many Calvinistic divines, they say to a sinner, "Now, *if you feel* your need of Christ; if you have repented so much; *if* you have been harrowed by the law to such-and-such a degree—then you may come to Christ on the ground that you are an awakened sinner." I say that is false! No man may come to Christ on the ground of his being an awakened sinner. He must come to Him as a sinner! When I come to Jesus, I know I am not to come unless I am awakened, but still, I do not come as an awakened sinner; I do not stand at the foot of His cross to be washed *because* I have repented; I bring nothing when I come, but sin! A sense of need is a good feeling, but when I stand at the foot of the cross, I do not believe in Christ because I have got good feelings—I believe in Him whether I have good feelings or not—

“Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Your blood was shed for me,
And that You bid me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God I come.”

Mr. Roger, Mr. Sheppard, Mr. Flavell, and several excellent divines in the Puritan age, and especially Richard Baxter, used to give descriptions of what a man must *feel* before he may dare to come to Christ. Now, I say in the language of good Mr. Fenner, father of those divines, who said he was but a babe in grace when compared with them—"I dare to say it, that all this is not Scriptural. Sinners do feel these things before they come, but they do not come on the ground of having felt it; they come on the ground of being sinners, and on no other ground whatever." The gate of mercy is opened and over the door it is written, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*." Between that word, "save," and the next word, "sinners," there is no adjective! It does not say, "penitent sinners," "awakened sinners," "sensible sinners," "grieving sinners," or "alarmed sinners." No, it only says, "sinners." And I know this—that when I come, I come to Christ *today*—for I feel it is as much a necessity of my life to come to the cross of Christ today as it was to come 10 years ago— when I come to Him, I dare not come as a conscious sinner, or an awakened sinner, but I have to come still as a sinner with nothing in my hands. I saw an aged man this week in the vestry of a chapel in Yorkshire. I had been saying something to this effect. The old man had been a Christian for years, and he said, "I never saw it put exactly so, but still, I know that is just the way I come. I say, 'Lord—

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Your cross I cling;
Naked, look to You for dress;
Helpless, come to You for grace;
Black—"("Black enough," said the old man)
I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Savior, or I die."""

Faith is getting right out of yourself, and getting into Christ. I know that many hundreds of poor souls have been troubled because the minister has said, "If you feel your need, you may come to Christ." "But," they say, "I do not feel my need enough. I am sure I do not." Many a score of letters have I received from poor troubled consciences who have said, "I would venture to believe in Christ to save me, if I had a tender conscience; if I had a soft heart—but oh, my heart is like a rock of ice which will not melt! I cannot feel as I would like to feel, and therefore I must not believe in Jesus." Oh, down with it, down with it! It is a wicked anti-Christ; it is flat Popery! It is not your soft heart that entitles you to believe—you are to believe in Christ to renew your hard heart, and come to Him with nothing about you but sin! The ground on which a sinner comes to Christ is that he is black with sin; that he is dead, and not that he knows he is dead; that he is lost, and not that he knows he is lost! I know he will not come unless he does know it, but that is not the ground on which he comes! It is the secret reason why, but it is not the public positive ground which he understands. Here was I, year after year, afraid to come to Christ because I thought I did not feel enough; and I used to read that hymn of Cowper's about being insensible as steel—

"If anything is felt 'tis only pain
To find I cannot feel."

When I believed in Christ, I thought I did not feel at all. *Now* when I look back, I find that I had been feeling all the while most acutely and intensely, and most of all, because I thought I did not feel! Generally the people who repent the most, think they are impenitent—and people feel most their need when they think they do not feel at all! We are no judge of our feelings, and hence the gospel invitation is not put upon

the ground of anything of which we can be a judge; it is put on the ground of our being sinners and nothing but sinners! “Well,” says one, “but it says, ‘Come unto Me all you who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest’—then we must be weary and heavy-laden.” I know. So it is in *that* text, but then there is another. “Whoever will let him come.” And that does not say anything about “weary and heavy-laden.” Besides, while the invitation is given to the weary and heavy-laden, you will perceive that the promise is not made to them *as* weary and heavy-laden, but it is made to them *as coming* to Christ! They did not know that they were weary and heavy-laden when they came; they thought they were not. They really were, but part of their weariness was that they could not be as weary as they would like to be, and part of their load was that they did not feel their load enough. They came to Christ just as they were, and He saved them—not because there was any merit in their weariness, or any efficacy in their being heavy-laden—He saved them as sinners, and nothing but sinners, and so they were washed in His blood and made clean! My dear hearer, do let me put this truth of God home to you. If you will come to Christ this morning, as nothing but a sinner, He will not cast you out!

Old Tobias Crisp says in one of his sermons upon this very point, “I dare to say it, but if you do come to Christ, whoever you may be, if He does not receive you, then He is not true to His word, for He says, ‘Him who comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.’ If you come, never mind qualification or preparation! He needs no qualification of duties, or of feelings either. You are to come just as you are, and if you are the biggest sinner out of hell, you are as fit to come to Christ as if you were the most moral and most excellent of men! There is a bath—who is fit to be washed? A man’s blackness is no reason why he should not be washed, but the clearer reason why he should be.” When our City magistrates were giving relief to the poor, nobody said,

“I am so poor; therefore I am not fit to have relief.” Your poverty is your preparation; the black is the white here. Strange contradiction! The only thing you can bring to Christ is your sin and your wickedness. All He asks is that you will come empty. If you have anything of your own, you must leave all before you come. If there is anything good in you, you cannot trust Christ—you must come with nothing in your hands! Take Him as all-in-all, and that is the *only* ground upon which a poor soul can be saved—as a sinner and nothing but a sinner!

IV. But not to stay longer, my fourth point has to do with **THE WARRANT OF FAITH**, or why a man dares to trust in Christ.

Is it not imprudent for any man to trust Christ to save him, and especially when he has no good thing whatever? Is it not an arrogant presumption for any man to trust Christ? No, sirs, it is not! It is a grand and noble work of God the Holy Spirit for a man to give the lie to all his sins, and still to believe and set to his seal that God is true, and believe in this virtue of the blood of Jesus! But why does any man dare to believe in Christ, I will ask you now. “Well,” says one man, “I summoned faith to believe in Christ because I did feel there was a work of the Spirit in me.” You do not believe in Christ at all! “Well,” says another, “I thought that I had a right to believe in Christ, because I felt somewhat.” You had not any right to believe in Christ at all on such a warrant as that! What is a man’s warrant, then, for believing in Christ? Here it is. Christ tells him to do it—that is his warrant! Christ’s *Word* is the warrant of the sinner for believing in Christ—neither what he feels nor what he *is*, nor what he is *not*—but that Christ has told him to do it! The gospel runs thus—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. He who believes not shall be damned.” faith in Christ, then, is a commanded duty as well as a blessed privilege, and what a mercy it is that it is a duty—because there never can

be any question but that a man has a right to do his duty! Now, on the ground that God commands me to believe, I have a right to believe, be I who I may. The gospel is sent to every creature. Well, I belong to that tribe; I am one of the “every creatures,” and that gospel commands me to believe and I do it. I cannot have done wrong in doing it, for I was commanded to do so! I cannot be wrong in obeying a command of God! Now, it is a command of God given to every creature that he should believe on Jesus Christ whom God has sent. This is your warrant, sinner, and a blessed warrant it is, for it is one which hell cannot gainsay, and which heaven cannot withdraw! You need not be looking within to look for the misty warrants of your experience; you need not be looking to your works or to your feelings to get some dull and insufficient warrant for your confidence in Christ; you may believe Christ because He tells you to do so! That is a sure ground to stand on, and one which admits of no doubt! I will suppose that we are all starving; that the city is besieged by sin, and shut up, and there has been a long, long famine, and we are ready to die of hunger. There comes out an invitation to us to repair at once to the palace of some great one, there to eat and drink, but we have grown foolish and will not accept the invitation. Suppose now that some hideous madness has got hold of us, and we prefer to die and had rather starve than come! Suppose the king’s herald should say, “Come and feast, poor hungry souls, and because I know you are unwilling to come, I add this threat, if you come not, my warriors shall be upon you. They shall make you feel the sharpness of their swords.” I think, my dear friends, we would say, “We bless the great man for that threat, because *now* we need not say, ‘I may not come,’ while the fact is we have to go or die! Now I need not say I am not fit to come for I am *commanded* to come, and I am threatened if I do not come—and so I will go.”

That awful sentence—"He who believes *not* shall be damned"—was added not out of anger, but because the Lord knew our silly madness, and that we would refuse our own mercies unless He thundered at us to make us come to the feast, "Compel them to come in." This was the Word of the Master of old, and that text is part of the carrying out of that exhortation, "Compel them to come in." Sinner, you cannot be lost by trusting Christ, but you will be lost if you do not trust Him! Yes, and lost for not trusting Him! I put it boldly now—sinner, not only may you come, but oh, I pray you, do not defy the wrath of God by refusing to come! The gate of mercy stands wide open—why will you not come? Why will you not? Why so proud? Why will you still refuse His voice, and perish in your sins? Mark, if you perish, any one of you, your blood lies not at God's door, nor Christ's door, but at your own! He can say of you, "You will not come unto Me that you might have life." Oh, poor trembler, if you are willing to come, there is nothing in God's Word to keep you from coming, but there are both threats to drive you, and powers to draw you! Still I hear you say, "I must not trust Christ." You *may*, I say, for every creature under heaven is commanded to do it, and what you are commanded to do, you may do. "Ah, well," says one, "still I do not feel that I may." There you go again; you say you will not do what God tells you, because of some stupid *feelings* of your own! You are not told to trust Christ because you *feel* anything, but simply because you are a *sinner*. Now, you *know* you are a sinner. "I am," says one, "and that is my sorrow." Why your sorrow? That is some sign that you do feel. "Yes," says one, "but I do not feel *enough*, and that is why I sorrow. I do not feel as I should." Well, suppose you do feel, or suppose you do not—you are a sinner, and, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "Oh, but I am such an old sinner, I have been

60 years in sin.” Where is it written that after 60 you cannot be saved? Sir, Christ could save you at a hundred—yes, if you were a Methuselah in guilt—“The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.” “Whoever will let him come.” “He is able to save to the uttermost them who come unto God by Him.” “Yes,” says one, “but I have been a drunk, a swearer, or lascivious, or profane.” Then, you are a sinner! You have not gone further than the uttermost! He is still able to save you. “Yes,” says another, “but you do not know how my guilt has been aggravated.” That only proves you to be a sinner, and that you are *commanded* to trust Christ and be saved. “Yes,” cries yet another, “but you do not know how often I have rejected Christ.” Yes, but that only makes you the more a sinner. “You do not know how hard my heart is.” I do know, but that only proves you to be a sinner, and still proves you to be one whom Christ came to save. “Oh, but, sir, I have not any good thing! If I had, you know, I should have something to encourage me.” The fact of your not having any good thing just proves to me that you are the man I am sent to preach to! Christ came to save that which was lost, and all you have said only proves that you are lost, and therefore, He came to save you! Trust Him. Trust Him! “But if I am saved,” says one, “I shall be the biggest sinner that ever was saved.” Then the greater music in heaven when you get there; the more glory to Christ—for the bigger the sinner, the more honor for Christ when at last he shall be brought home. “Yes, but my sin has abounded.” His grace shall much more abound! “But my sin has reached even to heaven.” Yes, but His grace reaches above the heavens! “Oh, but my guilt is as broad as the world.” Yes, but His righteousness is broader than a thousand worlds! “Yes, but my sin is scarlet.” Yes, but His blood is more scarlet than your sins, and can wash the scarlet out by a richer scarlet! “But I deserve to be lost, and death and hell cry for my damnation.” Yes, and so they may,

but the blood of Jesus Christ can cry louder than either death or hell! And it cries today, “Father, let the sinner live!”

Oh, I wish I could get this thought out of my own mouth and get it into your heads—that when God saves you, it is *not because of anything in you!* It is because of something in Himself! God’s love has no reason except in His own head; God’s reason for pardoning a sinner is found in His own heart, and not in the sinner; and there is as much reason in you why you should be saved, as why another should be saved, namely, *no reason at all!* There is no reason in you why He should have mercy on you, but there is no reason needed—for the reason lies in God, and in God alone!

V. And now, I come to the conclusion, and I trust you will have patience with me, for my last point is a very glorious one, and full of joy to those souls who as sinners dare to believe in Christ—**THE RESULT OF FAITH**—or how it speeds when it comes to Christ.

The text says, “He who believes on Him is not condemned.” There is a man here who has just this moment believed; he is not condemned! But he has been 50 years in sin, and has plunged into all manner of vice! His sins, which are many, are all forgiven him! He stands in the sight of God, now, as innocent as though he had never sinned! Such is the power of Jesus’ blood, that, “He who believes is not condemned.” Does this relate to what is to happen at the Day of Judgment? I pray you look at the text, and you will find it does not say, “He who believes on Him shall not *be* condemned,” but he *is* not! He is not *now*; and if he is not now, then it follows that he *never* shall be, for having believed in Christ, that promise still stands, “He who believes on Him is not condemned.” I believe, today I am not condemned. In 50 years’ time, that promise will be just the same—“He who believes on Him is not condemned.” So that the moment a man puts his trust in Christ, he is freed from all

condemnation—past, present, and to come—and from that day he stands in God’s sight as though he were without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. “But he sins,” you say. He does, indeed, but his sins are not laid to his charge; they were laid to the charge of Christ of old, and God shall never charge the offense on two—first on Christ, and then on the sinner. “Yes, but he *often* falls into sin.” That may be possible—though if the Spirit of God is in him, he sins not as he once did. He sins by reason of infirmity—not by reason of his love to sin—for now he hates it! But mark, you shall put it in your own way, if you will, and I will answer, “Yes, but though he sins, yet is he no more guilty in the sight of God, for all his guilt has been taken from him and put on Christ—positively, literally and actually lifted off from him and put upon Jesus Christ!” Do you see the Jewish host? There is a scapegoat brought out. The high priest confesses the sin of the people over the scapegoat’s head. The sin is all gone from the people, and laid upon the scapegoat. Away goes the scapegoat into the wilderness. Is there any sin left on the people? If there is, then the scapegoat has not carried it away, because it cannot be *here* and *there*, too! It cannot be carried away and left behind, too! “No,” you say, “Scripture says the scapegoat carried away the sin. There was none left on the people when the scapegoat had taken away the sin.” And so, when by faith we put our hand upon the head of Christ, does Christ take away our sin, or does He not? If He does not, then it is of no use our believing in Him! But if He does really take away our sin, our sin cannot be on Him, and on us, too! If it is on Christ, we are free, clear, accepted, justified—and this is the true doctrine of justification by faith—as soon as a man believes in Christ Jesus, his sins are gone from him, and gone away forever! They are blotted out forever. What if a man owes a hundred pounds, yet if he has got a receipt for it, he is free; it is blotted out; there is an erasure made in the book, and the

debt is gone. Though the man commits sin, yet the debt having been paid before even the debt was acquired, he is no more a debtor to the law of God. Does not Scripture say that God has cast His people's sins into the depths of the sea? Now, if they are in the depths of the sea, they cannot be on His people! Blessed be His name; in the day when He cast our sins into the depth of the sea, He viewed us as pure in His sight, and we stand accepted in the beloved! Then He says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." They cannot be removed, and still be here! Then if you believe in Christ, you are no more in the sight of God, a sinner; you are accepted as though you were perfect, as though *you* had kept the law— for Christ has kept it, and His righteousness is yours! You have broken it, but your sin is His, and He has been punished for it. Mistake not yourselves any longer—you are no more what you were. When you believe, you stand in Christ's place even as Christ of old stood in yours. The transformation is complete. The exchange is positive and eternal. They who believe in Jesus are as much accepted of God the Father as even His Eternal Son is accepted, and they who believe not, let them do what they will, they shall but go about to work out their own righteousness, but they abide under the law, and still shall they be under the curse!

Now, you who believe in Jesus, walk up and down the earth in the glory of this great truth! You are sinners in yourselves, but you are washed in the blood of Christ! David says, "Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." You have lately seen the snow come down—how clear! How white! What could be whiter? Why, the Christian is whiter than that! You say, "He is black." I know he is as black as anyone—as black as hell—but the blood drop falls on him, and he is as white—"whiter than snow." The next time you see the snow-white crystals falling from heaven, look on them and say, "Ah, though I must

confess within myself that I am unworthy and unclean, yet, believing in Christ, He has given me His righteousness so completely that I am even whiter than the snow as it descends from the treasury of God!” Oh, for faith to lay hold on this! Oh, for an overpowering faith that shall get the victory over doubts and fears, and make us enjoy the liberty wherewith Christ makes men free! Go home, you who believe in Christ—go to your beds this night and say, “If I die in my bed, I cannot be condemned.” Should you wake the next morning, go into the world and say, “I am not condemned!” When the devil howls at you, tell him, “Ah, you may accuse, but I am not condemned.” And if sometimes your sins rise—say, “Yes, I know you; but you are all gone forever! I am not condemned.” And when your turn shall come to die, shut your eyes in peace—

“Bold shall you stand in that great day,
For who anything to your charge can lay?”

Fully absolved by divine grace, you shall be found at last, and all sin’s tremendous curse and blame shall be taken away, not because of anything you have done. I pray you to do all you can for Christ out of gratitude, but even when you have done all, do not rest there! Rest still in the substitution and the sacrifice. Be what Christ was in His Father’s sight, and when conscience awakens, you can tell it that Christ was for you all that you ought to have been—that He has suffered all your penalty, and now neither mercy nor justice can smite you, since justice has clasped hands with mercy in a firm decree to save that man whose faith is in the cross of Christ! The Lord bless these words for His sake. Amen.

362 NONE BUT JESUS, PT. 2 – JOHN 3:18

A Sermon
Delivered on Sabbath Evening, February 17th, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At New Park Street Chapel, Southwark

“He who believes on Him is not condemned.” — John 3:18

IN THE MORNING SERMON [*Sermon #361*] our time was mainly taken up with the description of Faith—what it is. We had only a few minutes left at its close to describe what it leads to—the privilege of justification, which is a gift to the soul as the result of Faith. Let this high privilege, then, occupy our attention tonight. The text says, “He who believes on Him—(that is on Christ Jesus)—is not condemned.”

To take up the subject in order, we shall notice first, *the satisfactory declaration here made*; then, secondly, we shall endeavor to correct certain *misapprehensions respecting it, by reason of which, the Christian is often cast down*; and we shall close with *some reflections, positive and negative, as to what this text includes, and what it excludes*.

I. First of all, then, **WHAT A SATISFACTORY DECLARATION!**—“He who believes on Him is not condemned.”

You are aware that in our courts of law, a verdict of “*not guilty*,” amounts to an acquittal, and the prisoner is immediately discharged. So is it in the language of the gospel; a sentence of “*not condemned*” implies the justification of the sinner. It means that the believer in Christ receives *now* a *present* justification. Faith does not produce its fruits, by-and-by, but *now*. So far as

justification is the result of faith, it is given to the soul in the moment when it closes with Christ, and accepts Him as its all-in-all. Are they who stand before the throne of God justified tonight? So are we—as truly and as clearly justified as they who walk in white, and sing His praises above. The thief upon the cross was justified the moment that he turned the eyes of faith to Jesus, who was just then, hanging by his side; and Paul, the aged, after years of service, was not more justified than was the thief with no service at all! We are *today* accepted in the beloved, *today* absolved from sin, *today* innocent in the sight of God! Oh, ravishing, soul-transporting thought! There are some clusters of this vine which we shall not be able to gather till we go to heaven, but this is one of the first ripe clusters, and may be plucked and eaten here. This is not as the corn of the land which we can never eat till we cross the Jordan; but this is part of the manna in the wilderness and part, too, of our daily raiment with which God supplies us in our journeying to and fro. We are *now*—even *now* pardoned! Even now are our sins put away! Even now we stand in the sight of God as though we had never been guilty; innocent as father Adam when he stood in integrity, before he had eaten of the fruit of the forbidden tree; pure as though we had never received the taint of depravity in our veins. “There is, therefore, *now* no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.” There is not a sin in the Book of God, even *now*, against one of His people. There is nothing laid to their charge. There is neither speck, nor spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing remaining upon any believer in the matter of justification in the sight of the Judge of all the earth!

But to continue, the text evidently means not simply present, but *continual* justification. In the moment when you and I believed, it was said of us, “He is not condemned.” Many days have passed since then, many changes we have seen. But it is

as true of us tonight—"He is not condemned." The Lord alone knows how long our appointed day shall be—how long before we shall fulfill the hireling's time, and like a shadow flee away. But this we know—since every word of God is assured, and the gifts of God are without repentance—though we should live another 50 years, yet would it still be written here, "He who believes on Him is not condemned." Now, if by some mysterious dealing in providence our lives should be lengthened out to ten times the usual limit of man, and we should come to the eight or 900 years of Methuselah, still would it stand the same—"He who believes on Him is not condemned." "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." "The just shall live by faith." "He who believes on Him shall never be confounded." All these promises go to show that the justification which Christ gives to our faith is a continual one which will last as long as we shall live. And remember, it will last in eternity as well as in time! We shall not in heaven wear any other garment but that which we wear here. Today the righteous stand clothed in the righteousness of Christ; they shall wear this same wedding dress at the great wedding feast. But what if it should wear out? What if that righteousness should lose its virtue in the eternity to come? Oh beloved, we entertain no fear about that! Heaven and earth shall pass away, but this righteousness shall never wax old. No moth shall eat it; no thief shall steal it; no weeping hand of lamentation shall tear it in two. It is, it must be, eternal—even as Christ Himself—Jehovah our righteousness! Because He is our righteousness, the self-existent, the everlasting, the immutable Jehovah, of whose years there is no end, and whose strength fails not, therefore of our righteousness there is no end! And of its perfection and of its beauty there shall never be any termination.

The text, I think, very clearly teaches us that he who believes on Christ has received forever a continual justification.

Again—think for a moment—the justification which is spoken of here is *complete*. “He who believes on Him is not condemned”—that is to say not in any measure or in any degree! I know some think it is possible for us to be in such a state as to be half-condemned, and half-accepted. So far as we are sinners so far condemned, and so far as we are righteous so far accepted. Oh beloved, there is nothing like that in Scripture! It is altogether apart from the doctrine of the gospel. If it is of works, it is no more of grace; and if it is of grace, it is no more of works. Works and grace cannot mix and mingle any more than fire and water! It is either one or the other, it cannot be both; the two can never be allied! There can be no mixture of the two, no dilution of one with the other. He who believes is free from all iniquity, from all guilt, from all blame; and though Satan brings an accusation, yet it is a false one, for we are free even from accusation, since it is boldly challenged, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” It does not say, “Who shall *prove* it?” but “Who shall *lay* it to their charge?” They are so completely freed from condemnation, that not the shadow of a spot upon their soul is found; not even the slightest passing by of iniquity to cast its black shadow on them! They stand before God not only as half-innocent, but as perfectly so; not only as half-washed, but as whiter than snow! Their sins are not simply erased; they are blotted out—not simply put out of sight, but cast into the depths of the sea. Not merely gone, and gone as far as the east is from the west—but gone forever, once and for all! You know, beloved, that the Jew in his ceremonial purification never finds his conscience free from sin. After one sacrifice, he needed still another, for these offerings could never make the comers thereunto perfect. The next day’s sins needed a new lamb, and the next year’s iniquity

needed a new victim for atonement. “But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God.” No more burnt-offerings are needed; no more washing, no more blood, no more Atonement, no more sacrifice! Hear the dying Savior cry, “It is finished!” Your sins have sustained their deathblow; the robe of your righteousness has received its last thread; it is done, complete, and perfect! It needs no addition. It can never suffer any diminution. Oh, Christian, lay hold of this precious thought! I may not be able to state it except in weak terms, but let not my weakness prevent your apprehending its glory and its preciousness! It is enough to make a man leap, though his legs were loaded with irons, and to make him sing, though his mouth were gagged, to think that we are perfectly accepted in Christ, that our justification is impartial. It does not go to a limited extent, but goes the whole way; our unrighteousness is covered; from condemnation we are entirely and irrevocably free!

Once more; the non-condemnation is *effectual*. The royal privilege of justification shall never miscarry. It shall be brought home to every believer. In the reign of King George the Third, the son of a member of this church lay under sentence of death for forgery. My predecessor, Dr. Rippon, after incredible exertions, obtained a promise that his sentence should be remitted. By a singular occurrence the present senior deacon—then a young man—learned from the governor of the jail that the reprieve had not been received; and the unhappy prisoner would have been executed the next morning had not Dr. Rippon gone post-haste to Windsor, obtained an interview with the king in his bed-chamber, and received from the monarch's own hand, a copy of that reprieve which had been negligently put aside by a thoughtless officer. “I charge you, Doctor,” said his majesty, “to make good speed.” “Trust me for that, Sire,” responded your old pastor, and he returned to

London in time—just in time, and only just in time—for the prisoner was being marched with many others onto the scaffold! Yes, that pardon might have been given, and yet the man might have been executed if it had not been *effectually* carried out. But blessed be God, our non-condemnation is an effectual thing! It is not a matter of letter—it is a matter of fact! Ah, poor souls, you know that condemnation is a matter of fact. When you and I suffered in our souls, and were brought under the heavy hand of the law, we felt that its curses were no mock thunders like the wrath of the Vatican, but they were real! We felt that the anger of God was indeed a thing to tremble at; a real substantial fact. Now, just as real as the condemnation which Justice brings, just so real is the justification which mercy bestows. You are not only nominally guiltless, but you are really so, if you believe in Christ! You are not only nominally put into the place of the innocent, but you are really put there the moment you believe in Jesus. Not only is it said that your sins are gone, but they *are* gone! Not only does God look on you as though you were accepted, you *are* accepted! It is a matter of fact to you, as much a matter of fact as that you sinned; you do not doubt that you have sinned, you cannot doubt that—do not doubt, then, that when you believe, your sins are put away. For as certain as ever the black spot fell on you when you sinned, so certainly and so surely was it all washed out when you were bathed in that fountain filled with blood which was drawn from Emanuel's veins!

Come, my soul, think of this! You are actually and effectually cleared from guilt. You are led out of your prison. You are no more in fetters as a bond-slave. You are now delivered from the bondage of the law. You are freed from sin, and you can walk at large as a free man! Your Savior's blood has procured your full discharge. Come, my soul—you now have a right to come to your Father's feet. No flames of

vengeance are there to scare you; no fiery sword; justice cannot smite the innocent! Come, my soul, your disabilities are taken away. You were once unable to see your Father's face; you can see it now. You could not speak with Him, or He with you; but now you have access with boldness to this divine grace wherein we stand. Once there was a fear of hell upon you; there is no hell for you now! How can there be punishment for the guiltless? He, who believes, is guiltless, is not condemned, and cannot be punished! No frowns of an avenging God now! If God is viewed as a Judge, how could He frown upon the guiltless? How could the Judge frown upon the absolved one? More than all the privileges you might have enjoyed, if you had never sinned, are now yours since you are justified! All the blessings and more, which you would have had, if you had kept the law, are yours tonight because Christ has kept it for you. All the love and the acceptance which a perfectly obedient being could have obtained from God, belong to you, because Christ was perfectly obedient on your behalf, and has imputed all His merits to your account so that you might be exceedingly rich through Him, who for your sake became exceedingly poor!

Oh that the Holy Spirit would but enlarge our hearts—that we might suck sweetness out of these thoughts! There is no condemnation. Moreover, there never shall be any condemnation. The forgiveness is not partial, but perfect; it is so effectual that it delivers us from all the penalties of the law, gives to us all the privileges of obedience, and puts us actually high above where we would have been had we never sinned! It fixes our standing more secure than it was before we fell. We are not now where Adam was, for Adam might fall and perish. We are rather where Adam would have been if we could suppose God had put him into the Garden for seven years and said, "If you are obedient for seven years, your time of probation shall be over, and I will reward you." The children

of God in one sense may be said to be in a state of probation—in another sense there is no probation. There is no probation as to whether the child of God should be saved. He is already saved! His sins are washed away—his righteousness is complete—and if that righteousness could endure a million year's probation, it would never be defiled. In fact, it always stands the same in the sight of God, and must do so forever and ever.

II. Let me now endeavor to CORRECT SOME MISAPPREHENSIONS BY REASON OF WHICH CHRISTIANS ARE OFTEN CAST DOWN.

What simpletons we are! Whatever our natural age, how childish we are in spiritual things! What great simpletons we are when we first believe in Christ! We think that our being pardoned involves a great many things which we afterwards find have nothing whatever to do with our pardon. For instance, we think we shall never sin again; we fancy that the battle is all fought; that we have got into a fair field with no more war to wage—that we have got the victory and have only just to stand up and wave the palm branch; that all is over, that God has only got to call us up to Himself, and we shall enter into heaven without having to fight any enemies upon earth! Now, all these are obvious mistakes. Though the text has a great meaning, it does not mean anything of this kind! Observe that although it does assert, “He who believes is not condemned,” it does not say that he who believes shall not have his faith exercised. Your faith will be exercised. An untried faith will be no faith at all; God never gave men faith without intending to try it. Faith is received for the very purpose of endurance. Just as our Rifle Corps friends put up the target with the intention of shooting at it, so does God give faith with the intention of letting trials and troubles, and sin and Satan aim all their darts at it. When you have faith in Christ, it is a great

privilege; but remember that it involves a great trial. You asked for great faith the other night—did you consider that you asked for great troubles, too? You cannot have great faith to lay up and rust. Mr. Great-Heart in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim* was a very strong man, but then what strong work he had to do! He had to go with all those women and children many scores of times up to the Celestial City, and back again; he had to fight all the giants, and drive back all the lions; to slay the giant Slaygood and knock down the Castle of Despair. If you have a great measure of faith, you will have need to use it all! You will never have a single scrap to spare; you will be like the virgins in our Lord's parable—even though you are a wise virgin—you will have to say to others who might borrow of you, "Not so, lest there be not enough for us and for you." But when your faith is exercised with trials, do not think you are brought into judgment for your sins. Oh, no, believer, there is plenty of exercise, but that is not condemnation! There are many trials, but we are still justified! We may often be buffeted, but we are never accursed; we may oftentimes be cast down, but the sword of the Lord never can and never will smite us to the heart. Yet more—not only may our faith be exercised, but our faith may come to very low ebb, and we are still not condemned! When your faith gets so small that you can not see it, even then you are still not condemned! If you have ever believed in Jesus, your faith may be like the sea when it goes out a very long way from the shore, and leaves a vast track of mud, and some might say the sea was gone or dried up—but you are still not condemned when your faith is almost dried up! And I dare to say it—when your faith is at the flood-tide, you are not more *accepted*, then, than when your faith is at the lowest ebb! Your acceptance does not depend upon the *quantity* of your faith—it only depends upon its *reality*. If you are really resting in Christ, though your faith may be but as a spark, and a thousand devils may try to

quench that one spark, yet you are not condemned—you still stand accepted in Christ! Though your comforts will necessarily decay as your faith declines, yet your acceptance does not decay; though faith does rise and fall like the thermometer; though faith is like the mercury in the bulb—and all weathers change it—yet God’s love is not affected by the weather of earth, or the changes of time! Until the perfect righteousness of Christ can be a mutable thing—a football to be kicked about by the fleet of fiends—your acceptance with God can never change! You are perfectly accepted in the beloved.

There is another thing which often tries the child of God. He at times loses the light of his Father’s countenance. Now, remember, the text does not say, “He who believes shall not lose the light of God’s countenance.” He may do so, but he shall not be condemned for all that. You may walk, not only for days, but for months in such a state that you have little fellowship with Christ; very little communion with God of a joyous sort. The promises may seem broken to you; the Bible may afford you but little comfort; and when you turn your eyes to heaven, you may only have to feel more of the smarting that is caused by your Father’s rod; you may have vexed and grieved His Spirit, and He may have turned away His face from you. But you are not condemned for all that! Mark the testimony—“He who believes is not condemned.” Even when your Father smites you, and leaves a welt at every stroke, and brings the blood at every blow—there is not a particle of condemnation in any one stroke! Not in His anger, but in His dear covenant love He smites you; there is an unmixed and unalloyed affection in every love-stroke of chastisement from your Father’s hands, just as there is in the kisses of Jesus Christ’s lips! Oh, believe this—it will tend to lift up your heart—it will cheer you when neither sun nor moon appear! It will honor your God. It will show you where your acceptance really lies. When His

face is turned away, still believe Him, and say, “He abides faithful though He hides His face from me.” I will go a little further. The child of God may be so assaulted by Satan that he may be well-nigh given up to despair, and yet he is not condemned! The devils may beat the great hell-drum in his ear till he thinks himself to be on the very brink of perdition. He may read the Bible, and think that every threat is against him, and that every promise shuts its mouth and will not cheer him—and he may at last despond and despond and despond—till he is ready to break the harp that has so long been hanging on the willow. He may say, “The Lord has forsaken me; my God will be gracious no more,” but it is not true! Yes, he may be ready to swear a thousand times that God’s mercy is gone forever, and that His faithfulness will fail forever more, but it is not true, it is not true! A thousand liars so swearing to a falsehood could not make it true, and our doubts and fears are all of them, liars! If there were ten thousand of them, and they all professed the same, it is a lie that God did ever forsake His people, or that He ever cast from Him an innocent man—and you are innocent, remember, when you believe in Jesus! “But,” you say, “I am full of sin.” “Yes,” I say, “but that sin has been laid on Christ.” “Oh,” you say, “but I sin daily.” “Yes,” I say, “but that sin years ago was laid on Him before you committed it. It is not yours. Christ has taken it away once and for all. You are a righteous man by faith, and God will not forsake the righteous, nor will He cast away the innocent.” I say, then, the child of God may have his faith at low ebb; he may lose the light of his Father’s countenance, and he may even get into thorough despair; but yet all these cannot disprove my text—“He who believes is not condemned.”

“But what,” you ask, “if the child of God should sin?” It is a deep and tender subject, yet must we touch it and be bold. I would not mince God’s truth lest any should make a bad use

of it. I know there are some, not the people of God, who will say, “Let us sin; that grace may abound!” Their condemnation is just; I cannot help the perversion of truth. There are always men who will take the best of food as though it were poison, and make the best of the truth of God into a lie, and so be damning their own souls! You ask, “What if a child of God should fall into sin?” I answer, “The child of God *does* fall into sin.” Every day he mourns and groans because when he would do good, evil is present with him. But though he falls into sin, he is not condemned for all that—not by *one* of them, or by *all* of them put together, because his acceptance does not depend upon himself, but upon *the perfect righteousness of Christ*. And that perfect righteousness is not invalidated by any sins of his! He is perfect in Christ; and until Christ is imperfect, the imperfections of the creature do not mar the justification of the believer in the sight of God. But oh, if he falls into some glaring sin—O God, keep us from it!—if he falls into some glaring sin, he shall go with broken bones, but he shall reach heaven for all that! Though, in order to try him, and let him see his vileness, he is allowed to go far astray, yet He who bought him will not lose him; He who chose him will not cast him away—He will say unto him, “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins.” David may go ever so far away, but David is not lost! He comes back and he cries, “Have mercy upon me, O God!” And so shall it be with every believing soul—Christ shall bring him back! Though he slips, he shall be kept, and all the chosen seed shall meet around the throne of God. If it were not for this last truth of God—though some may stick at it—what would become of some of God’s people? They would be given up to despair! If I have been speaking to a backslider, I pray he will not make a bad use of what I have said. Let me say to him, “Poor backslider! Your Father’s heart yearns over you! He has

not erased your name out of the registry! Come back, come back, now, to Him, and say, "Receive me graciously and love me freely." And He will say, "I will put you among the children." He will pass by your backsliding and evil; He will heal your iniquities, and you shall yet stand once more in His favor, and know yourself to still be accepted in the Redeemer's righteousness, and saved by His blood! This text does not mean that the child of God shall not be tried, or that he shall not even, sometimes, fall under the trial; but it does mean this—once and for all—he who believes on Christ is not condemned! At no time; by no means is he under the sentence of condemnation; but is always justified in the sight of God.

III. Now, dear brothers and sisters, but little time remains for the last points. Therefore, in a hurried manner let me notice **WHAT THIS TEXT EVIDENTLY INCLUDES**; and may God grant that these few words may nevertheless do good to our souls!

"He who believes on Him is not condemned." If we are not condemned, then at no time does God ever look upon His children, when they believe in Christ, as being guilty! Are you surprised that I should put it so? I put it so again—from the moment when you believe in Christ, God ceases to look upon you as being guilty; for He never looks upon you apart from Christ. You often look upon yourself as guilty, and you fall upon your knees, as you should do, and you weep and lament; but even then, while you are weeping over inbred and actual sin, He is still saying out of heaven, "So far as your justification is concerned, you are all fair and lovely." You are black as the tents of Kedar—that is, yourself by nature; you are fair as the curtains of Solomon—that is, yourself in Christ. You are black with sin—that is, yourself in Adam; but lovely—that is, yourself in the second Adam. Oh, think on that—that you are always in God's sight, lovely; always in God's sight as though

you were perfect; for you are complete in Christ Jesus, and perfect in Christ Jesus, as the apostle puts it in another place. You always stand completely washed and fully clothed in Christ! Remember this, for it is certainly included in my text.

Another great thought included in my text is this; you are never able as a believer to be punished for your sins. You will be *chastised* on account of them, as a father chastises his child; that is a part of the gospel dispensation; but you will not lie smitten for your sins as the law-giver smites the criminal! Your Father may often punish you as He punishes the wicked, but never for the same reason! The ungodly stand on the ground of their own demerits—their sufferings are awarded as their due deserts; but your sorrows do not come to you as matter of desert—they come to you as a matter of love. God knows that in one sense your sorrows are such a privilege, that you may account them as a *blessing* you do not deserve! I have often thought of that when I have had a sore trouble. I know some people say, “You deserved the trouble.” Yes, my dear brothers and sisters, but there is not enough merit in all Christians put together to deserve such a good thing as the loving rebuke of our heavenly Father! Perhaps you cannot see that; you cannot think that a trouble can come to you as a real blessing in the covenant; but I know that the rod of the covenant is as much the gift of divine grace as the blood of the covenant. It is not a matter of desert or merit—it is given to us because we need it—but I question whether we were ever so good as to deserve it! We were never able to get up to so high a standard as to deserve so rich, so gracious a providence as this covenant blessing—the rod of our chastening God! Never at any time in your life has a law-stroke fallen upon you. Since you believed in Christ, you are out of the law’s jurisdiction. The law of England cannot touch a Frenchman while he lives under the protection of his own Emperor. You are not under the law—

you are under grace! The law of Sinai cannot touch you, for you are out of its jurisdiction. You are not in Sinai or in Arabia; you are not the son of Hagar or the son of a handmaid—you are the son of Sarah, and have come to Jerusalem, and are free! You are out of Arabia and have come to God's own happy land; you are not under Hagar, but under Sarah—under God's covenant of grace. You are a child of promise, and you shall have God's own inheritance. Believe this, that a lawstroke shall never fall on you—never shall God's anger in a judicial sense drop on you. He may give you a chastising stroke—not as the result of sin—but rather as the result of His own rich grace, that would only get the sin out of you, that you may be perfected in sanctification, even as you are now perfect and complete before Him in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ!

I was about to go into a list of things which this text includes, but the time fails me—therefore I must spend the last minute or two in saying **WHAT THIS TEXT EXCLUDES**.

What does it exclude? Well I am sure it excludes boasting. “He who believes is not condemned.” Ah, if it said, “He who *works* is not condemned,” then you and I might boast in any quantity! But when it says, “He *who believes*”—why, there is no room for us to say half a word for old self! No, Lord, if I am not condemned, it is Your free grace, for I have deserved to be condemned a thousand times since I have been in this pulpit tonight! When I am on my knees, and I am not condemned, I am sure it must be sovereign grace, for even when I am praying, I deserve to be condemned. Even when we are repenting, we are sinning and adding to our sins while we are repenting of them! Every act we do, as the result of the flesh, is to sin again, and our best performances are so stained with sin, that it is hard to know whether they are good works or bad works! So far as they are our own, they are bad, and so far as they are the works

of the Spirit, they are good. But then the goodness is not ours—it is the Spirit’s—and only the evil remains to us! Ah, then, we cannot boast! Be gone, pride! Be gone! The Christian must be a humble man; if he lifts up his head to say something, then he is nothing, indeed! He does not know where he is, or where he stands, when he once begins to boast—as though his own right hand had gotten him the victory. Leave off boasting, Christian! Live humbly before your God, and never let a word of self-congratulation escape your lips! Sacrifice self, and let your song be before the throne—“Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Your name be glory forever!”

What next does the text exclude? I think it ought to exclude—now I am about to smite myself—it ought to exclude doubts and fears. “He who believes is not condemned.” How dare you and I draw such long faces, and go about as we sometimes do, as though we had a world of cares upon our backs! What would I have given 10 or 11 years ago if I could have known this text was sure to me, that I was not condemned? Why, I thought if I could feel I was once forgiven, and had to live on bread and water, and be locked up in a dungeon and every day be flogged with a cat-o-nine tails, I would gladly have accepted it, if I could have once felt my sins forgiven! Now you are a forgiven man, and yet you are cast down! Oh, shame on you! No condemnation; and yet miserable? Fie, Christian! Get up and wipe the tears from your eyes! Oh, if there is a person lying in jail, to be executed next week; if you could go to him and say, “You are pardoned,” would he not spring up from his seat with delight? And although he might have lost his goods, and though it would be possible for him, after pardon, to have to suffer many things; yet as long as life was spared, what would all this be to him? He would feel that it was less than nothing! Now, Christian, you are pardoned! Your sins are all forgiven! Christ has said to you, “Your sins, which are many, are all

forgiven you”—and are you yet miserable? Well, if we must be so, sometimes, let us make it as short as we can; if we must sometimes be cast down, let us ask the Lord to lift us up again! I am afraid some of us get into bad habits, and come to make it a matter of practice to be downcast. Mind Christian, mind, it will grow upon you—that peevish spirit—if you do not resist that sinfulness at first, it will get worse with you; if you do not come to God to turn these doubts and fears out of you, they will soon swarm upon you like flies in Egypt! When you are able to kill the first great doubt, you will perhaps kill a hundred; for one great doubt will breed a thousand, and to kill the mother is to kill the whole brood! Therefore look with all your heart against the first doubt, lest you should become confirmed in your despondency, and grow into sad despair, “He who believes on Him is not condemned.” If this excludes boasting, it ought to exclude doubts, too.

Once more—“He who believes on Him is not condemned.” This excludes sinning any more. My Lord, have I sinned against You so many times, and yet have You freely forgiven me all? What stronger motive could I have for keeping me from sinning again? Ah, there are some who are saying this is a licentious doctrine; a thousand devils rolled into one must the man be who can find any licentiousness here! What? Go and sin because I am forgiven? Go and live in iniquity because Jesus Christ took my guilt, and suffered in my place? Human nature is bad enough, but I think this is the very worst state of human nature, when it tries to draw an argument for sin from the free grace of God! Bad as I am, I feel this—that it is hard to sin against a pardoning God! It is far harder to sin against the blood of Christ, and against a sense of pardon, than it is against the terrors of the law, and the fear of hell itself. I know that when my soul is most alarmed by a dread of the wrath of God, I can sin with comfort compared with what I could when I have a

sense of His love shed abroad in my heart. What more monstrous—to read your title clear—and sin? Oh, vile reprobate! You are on the borders of the deepest hell! But I am sure if you are a child of God, you will say when you have read your title clear and feel yourself justified in Christ Jesus—

“Now, for the love I bear His name,
What was my gain, I count my loss;
My former pride I call my shame,
And nail my glory to His cross.”

Yes, and I must and will esteem all things but loss for Jesus’ sake! O may my soul be found in Him, perfect in His righteousness! This will make you live near to Him—this will make you like Him. Do not think that by dwelling on this doctrine it will make you think lightly of sin! It will make you think of it as a hard and stern executioner to put Christ to death—as an awful load that could never be lifted from you except by the eternal arm of God! And then you will come to hate sin with all your soul because it is rebellion against a loving and gracious God, and you shall, by this means, far better than by any Arminian doubts or any legal quibbles, be led to walk in the footsteps of your Lord Jesus, and to follow the Lamb wherever He goes!

I think this whole sermon, though I have been preaching to the children of God, is meant for sinners, too. Sinner, I would that you did say so. If you know this, that *he who believes is not condemned*, then, sinner, if you believe, you will not be condemned—and may all I have said tonight help you to this belief in your soul! “Oh, but,” you say, “may I trust Christ?” As I said this morning, [*Sermon #361*] it is not a question of whether you may or may not, you are *commanded*! The Scripture commands the gospel to be preached to every creature, and the

gospel is—“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” I know you will be too proud to do it unless God, by His grace, should humble you; but if you feel tonight that you are nothing, and have nothing of your own, I think you will be right glad to take Christ to be your all-in-all! If you can say with poor Jack the Huckster—

“I’m a poor sinner and nothing at all,”

you may go on and say with him, this night—

“But Jesus Christ is my all-in-all.”

God grant that it may be so, for His name’s sake. Amen.

363 THE GLORIOUS RIGHT HAND OF THE LORD – NUM. 11:23

A Sermon
Delivered on Sabbath Morning, February 24th, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At Exeter Hall, Strand

“And Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it outside the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the tabernacle of the congregation. And it came to pass, that everyone which sought the LORD went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was outside the camp.” — Numbers 11:23

GOD HAD MADE a positive promise to Moses that for the space of a whole month he would feed the vast host in the wilderness with flesh. Moses, being overtaken by a fit of unbelief, looks to the outward means—calculates his commissariat—and is at a loss to know how the promise can be fulfilled. Shall the flocks and the herds be slain? How, then, should they have cattle wherewith to stock the land upon which they hoped soon to enter? And if they should slaughter *all* their beasts, there would not be food enough for ravenous people for a month. Shall all the fish of the sea leave their watery element, and come to the tables of these clamorous hungry men? Even then, Moses thought there would be scarcely enough food to feed so vast a host for a month! You will see, my brothers and sisters, right readily the mistake which Moses made. He looked to the *creature* instead of the *Creator*. Does the Creator expect the creature to fulfill His promise? No; only He

who makes, fulfills. If He speaks, it is done—done by Himself—His promises do not depend for their fulfillment upon the cooperation of the puny strength of man! God as a sovereign gives an absolute promise; and He can do it without fear of mistake, because He has Omnipotence wherewith to fulfill His greatest word. It were an error, indeed, to look to the sea for fish, instead of waiting upon heaven for the promise; to look to the flocks for food, instead of believing on Him to whom belongs the cattle on a thousand hills! Suppose, my friends, this country should be threatened by an invasion of some foreign power, and you, in your wisdom and full of trembling, should say to those whose province it is to guard our happy island—“I fear this land can never be protected, for the Emperor of China has but very little power; the Presidents of the Republics of South America have but little influence”? You would be stared at! Men would ask, what has that to do with the question? The troops of Britain are to defend the land, not the troops of China, or Bolivia. What matters the weakness of those republics or kingdoms? They are not expected to defend our land! You would be absurd in looking for help where help was neither expected nor promised. And yet how commonly we do the same! *God* has promised to supply our needs, and we look to the *creature* to do what God has promised to do! And then, because we perceive the creature to be weak and feeble, we indulge in unbelief! Why do we look to that quarter at all? Will you look to the top of the Alps for summer heat? Will you journey to the North Pole to gather fruits ripened in the sun? Or will you take your journey towards the equator, so that your body may be braced by cool invigorating breezes? Verily, you would act no more foolishly if you did this than when you look to the weak for strength, or the creature to do the Creator's work! The great folly of Moses is the folly of most believers. Let us, then, put the question aright. The ground of faith is not

the sufficiency of the visible means for the performance of the promise, but the allsufficiency of the invisible God most surely to do as He has said! And then, if after that we dare to indulge in mistrusts, the question of God comes home mightily to us—“Has the Lord’s hand waxed short?” And may it happen, too, in His mercy, that with the question, there may come also that blessed promise, “You shall now see whether My word shall come to pass unto you or not.”

It is an amazing thing that such a question as this should ever be asked at all—“Has the Lord’s hand waxed short?” If we look anywhere and everywhere, apart from the conduct of man, there is nothing to suggest the suspicion. Look to God’s *creation*! Is there anything there which would make you say, “Is the Lord’s hand waxed short?” What pillar of the heavens has begun to reel? What curtain of the sky has been torn or moth-eaten? Have the foundations of the earth begun to reel? Do they not abide as the Lord has settled them? Has the sun grown dim with age? Have the starry lamps flickered or gone out in darkness? Are there signs of decay, today, upon the face of God’s creation? Have not howling tempests, the yawning ocean, and death-bearing hurricanes asserted but yesterday their undiminished might? Say, is not the green earth as full of vitality, as ready to yield us harvests, now, as it ever has been? Do the showers fall less frequently? Has the sun ceased to warm? Are there any signs and tokens that God’s creation is tottering to its decay? No! Journey where you will, you will see God as potent upon the face of the earth, and in the very bowels of the globe, as He was when He first said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. There is nothing which would tempt us to surmise or suspect that the Lord’s hand has waxed short. And look you, too, in *providence*—is there anything there that would suggest the question? Are not His prophecies still fulfilled? Does He not cause all things to work together for good? Do the cattle on a

thousand hills low out to Him for hunger? Do you meet with the skeletons of birds that have fallen to the ground from famine? Does He neglect to give to the fish their food, or do the sea-monsters die? Does not God still open His hands and supply the needs of every living thing? Is He less bounteous, today, than He was in the time of Adam? Is not the cornucopia still as full? Does He not still scatter mercies with both His hands right lavishly? Are there any tokens in providence, any more than in nature, that God's arm has waxed short? And look, too, in the matter of *divine grace*—is there any token in the work of grace that God's power is failing? Are not sinners still saved? Are not degenerates still reclaimed? Are not drunks still uplifted from their sties to sit upon the throne of God with princes? Are not harlots as truly reclaimed as were those in the days of Christ? Is not the Word of God still quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword? Which of His arrows has been blunted? Where have you seen the sword of the Lord snapped in two? When has God assayed to melt a heart and failed in the attempt? Which of His people has found the riches of His grace drained dry? Which of His children has had to mourn that the unsearchable riches of Christ had failed to supply his need?

In grace, as well as in providence and nature, the unanimous verdict is that God is still Almighty; that He does as He wills, and fulfills all His promises, and His counsels. How is it, then, that such a question as this ever came from the lips of God, Himself? Who suggested it? *What* suggested it? What could there have been that should lead Him, or any of His creatures to say, "Is the Lord's hand waxed short?" We answer there is but one creature that God has made that ever doubts Him! The little sparrows doubt not—though they have neither barn nor field, yet they sweetly sing at night as they go to their roosts, though they know not where tomorrow's meal shall be

found. The very cattle trust Him, and even in days of drought, you have seen them when they pant for thirst, how they expect the water—how the very first token of it makes them show in their very animal frame, by some dumb language, that they felt that God would not leave them to perish! The angels never doubt Him, or the devils either—devils believe and tremble! But it was left for *man*—the most favored of all creatures—to mistrust his God! This high, this black, this infamous sin of doubting the power and faithfulness of Jehovah was reserved for the fallen race of rebellious Adam! And we alone, out of all the beings that God has ever fashioned, dishonor Him by unbelief, and tarnish His honor by mistrust!

I shall now try, as God shall help me, to mention some four or five cases in which men act as if they really believed that God's hand had waxed short, and I pray that in the most of these cases, this malady may be at once healed by the fact that God has said, "You shall now see whether My word shall come to pass unto you or not."

I. First of all, with regard to **THE CHURCH AS A WHOLE**, how often is it true that she so behaves herself as if she had a question in her mind as to whether the Lord's hand had waxed short? She believes that the divine hand was once mighty enough to bring in 3,000 in one day by the simple preaching of Peter. She believes that her God was with her in olden times so mightily that her poor illiterate preachers were more than a match for the scholars of Socrates and Solon, and were able to overturn the gods of the heathen, though they had both poetry and philosophy to be their bulwarks. She still believes this and yet, how often does she act as though the gospel had become feeble and outworn, and the Spirit of God had been utterly withdrawn from her? In those early days she sent her missionaries to the ends of the earth! They were unprovided for, but they went forth without purse or script, believing that

He who called them to go, would find them sustenance. They landed on islands that were unknown to man, and ventured among barbarous tribes who knew nothing of civilization! They ventured their lives even to the death—but they won for Christ the empire of the whole earth till there was not a spot known to men at that time where the name of Jesus had not been preached, and where the gospel had not been proclaimed! But, now, we—the degenerate sons of glorious fathers—are afraid to trust God! There are some who would shut out the gospel from India, because, indeed, it might disturb our pitiful empire over that people! There are others who think the gospel is ill-adapted to some minds, and that civilization must go before the cross, and not the gospel in the vanguard of all true civilization among barbarous tribes! The mass of us—it is common to us all—the mass of us would be afraid to go out trusting in God to supply our needs! We would insist that everything should be prepared for us, and that the way should be paved! We are not ready to leap as champions upon the wall of the citadel, leading the forlorn hope, and planting the standard where it never stood before. No, we can only follow in the track of others! We have few Careys and few Knibbs, few men who can go first and foremost saying, “This is God’s cause! Jehovah is the only God, and in the name of the Eternal, let the idols be abolished!” O for more anointed ones to preach the gospel, believing in its intrinsic might, assured that where it is preached faithfully, the Spirit of God is never absent! The doubts, the fears, the calculations, the policies, the judicious advisors of too many Christians prove my point, that often the Church acts as if she thought the Lord’s hand were waxed short! O Zion! Get up! Get up! Count no more your hosts, for their strength is your weakness! Measure no longer your wealth, for your wealth has often been your poverty, and your poverty your wealth! Think not of the learning or the eloquence of your

ministers and missionaries, for full often these things do but stand in the way of the Eternal God! Come forth in simple confidence in His promise, and you shall see whether He will not do according to His word; you shall see a nation born at once; you shall behold the reign of Christ hastening on when you know how to deal with the world in the power of faith, believing in Christ, knowing that He shall have the beastly for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession!

I ought to say, here, that while this is a common sin of the church, yet there are very many missionaries who have gone out from England during the last few years unconnected with any Society, and that there are now hundreds throughout the whole earth who have no visible means of support but who, by faith and prayer, depending simply upon God, find themselves as well provided for as those who have a Society at their back! I happen to be acquainted with some few of these men, who have been foolish enough to trust God; who have been silly enough to believe His promise; who have been weak enough to rely only upon Him! And I can say their testimony is, that in all things, God has been as good to them as His word, and I know they have been more useful as missionaries, and more successful in evangelization because they believed God! They have proved their faith by their acts, and God has honored their faith by giving them great success. I speak thus not of all—there are a few exceptions—but still, it is the general rule that as a Church, the Church does not believe God—she believes her *subscribers*, she does not believe the Lord! She believes the *committee*—she does not trust in the Eternal. She trusts in the *means*—she does not rest on the bare arm of God. She wants to have her arm sleeved, girded about, and robed with the weavings of man!

II. But I now pass on to a second point. **WHEN BELIEVERS DOUBT THEIR GOD WITH REGARD TO PROVIDENCE**, the question might well be asked of them, “Is the Lord’s hand waxed short?”

I do not doubt that I am speaking to some here, this morning, which have had many hisses and crosses in their business. Instead of getting forward, they are going back, and perhaps even bankruptcy stares them in the face. Or possibly, being hard working men, they may have been long out of employment, and nothing now seems to be before their eyes but the starvation of themselves, and their little ones. It is hard to bear this. This is an iron that enters into the very soul; the pangs of hunger are not very easily appeased, and to have need and destitution constantly before our eyes is enough to bring down the strong man, and make the mighty tremble. Little do some of us know how sharp and how acute must be these trials of famine and nakedness. But do you doubt, O believer, do you doubt as to whether God will fulfill His promises wherein He said, “His place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks; bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure”? Would you question the advice of your Master—“Therefore take no thought, saying, what will we eat? Or, what will we drink? Or, how will we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek”? “Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns. Yet your heavenly Father feeds them”? “Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They toil not, neither do they spin, and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these”? And so you think that your heavenly Father, though He knows that you have need of these things, will yet forget you? When not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father, and the very hairs of your head are all numbered, yet you still mistrust and doubt Him? Perhaps your affliction will continue

upon you till you dare to trust your God, and then it shall end. Full many there are who have been tried and sorely vexed till at last they have been driven in sheer desperation to exercise faith in God—and the moment of their faith has been the instant of their deliverance! They have seen whether God would keep His promise or not. And now, O true believer, what say you to this picture? In the cold, cold winter, when the snows have fallen thick on every tree, and the ground is hard and crisp, you have sometimes seen the charitable man open wide the window of his house and scatter crumbs along the white snow; and you have seen the birds come from all the trees around, and there they ate and were satisfied. A slanderer who lives next door tells you that that man starves his children! Do you believe him? Feed the sparrows, and neglect the offspring of his loins? Give crumbs to birds, and not feed his sons and daughters? You feel instinctively that the kind heart which remembers the fowls of heaven must yet more remember his offspring! But what do you say to this picture concerning yourself? Your God hears the young ravens when they cry, and gives liberally to all the creatures that His hands have made, and will He forget His sons and His daughters? His people bought with blood, His own peculiar heritage? No. Dare to believe Him *now*. His hands have not waxed short. Dare to trust Him *now*. Please not Satan, and vex not yourself by indulging those hard thoughts of Him anymore! Say, “My Father, You will hear my cry. You will supply all my needs.” And according to your faith, so shall it be done unto you. Look back, sir, look back upon the past! How many deliverances have you had? You have been in as bad a plight as this, *before*—did He leave you then? He has been with you in six troubles, and are there not six arguments why He should not leave you in the seventh? You are growing gray-headed, and you have found Him faithful for 60 years! Ah, how few more you have to live! Suppose you live

till seventy—there are but ten! He has been faithful to you in sixty, and can you not trust Him with ten? Surely you ought to say, and you *must* say, I think, if you are actuated by a right spirit, “O God, I leave all things in Your hands. I will have done with these cares. I will leave everything to You. I know that You love me, and will not forsake Your own, but will surely deliver them out of all their temptations.” You shall have my text fulfilled to you, I trust—“You shall see now whether My word shall come to pass unto you or not.”

III. But to proceed—there is a third way by which this question might be very naturally suggested, and that is **WHEN A MAN WHO HAS FAITH IN CHRIST IS EXERCISED WITH DOUBTS AND FEARS WITH REGARD TO HIS OWN FINAL PERSEVERANCE, OR HIS OWN PRESENT ACCEPTANCE IN CHRIST.**

I must confess here, with sorrow, that I have seasons of despondency and depression of spirit which I trust none of you are called to suffer. And at such times, I have doubted my interest in Christ, my calling, my election, my perseverance, my Savior's blood, and my Father's love. I am sorry I ever told you that, but having done so on one occasion, I make now my humble apology as before God for it. I met with a sharp rebuke this last week. A brother who lives very near to God—I believe one of the holiest men living—told me he never had a doubt of his acceptance once he believed in Christ, and another Christian confirmed his testimony. I do not question the truth of my brothers, but I do envy them. 'Tis a wondrous position to stand in! I know how it is. They, both of them, live by simple faith upon the Son of God, and one of them said to me, “When I speak to some of the friends, and tell them they should not doubt and fear, they say, ‘Yes, but our minister has doubts and fears.’” When he said that, I felt how wrong I had been, because the pastor should be an example to the flock, and if I have

sinned in this respect, as I must sorrowfully confess I have, at least *there was no necessity that I should have said so*, for now it gives cause to some of the weak of the flock to excuse themselves. My brothers and sisters, if I should stand here and say I occasionally steal my neighbor's goods, you would be shocked! But when I said that I sometimes doubt my God, you were not shocked! *There is as much guilt in the one as in the other*. There is the highest degree of criminality in connection with doubting God, and I feel it so. I do not see that we ought to offer any excuse whatever for our doubting our God. He does not deserve it of us—He is a true and faithful God, and with so many instances of His love and of His kindness as I have received, and daily receive at His hands—I feel I have no excuse to offer either to Him or to you for having dared to doubt Him. 'Twas a wicked sin; 'twas a great and grievous offense; but I pray you, do not use that sin on my part as a cloak for yourselves! I pray that I may be delivered from it entirely, and with an unstaggering faith, like Abraham, know that what He has promised, He is able also to perform. And then, I trust I shall not have under my pastoral care a puny race of men who cannot trust their God, and who cannot, therefore, do anything—but a strong host of heroes who live by faith upon the Son of God—who loved them and gave Himself for them; who shall be a thundering legion; whose march to battle shall be but a march to victory, and the drawing of whose swords shall be but the prelude and prophecy of their triumph!

Take not me as an example further than I follow my Lord, but pray for me that my faith may be increased. Doubt not, I pray you! Believe your God, and you shall prosper. The joy of the Lord is our strength, not the melancholy of our hearts. It does not say, "He who doubts shall be saved," but, "He who *believes* shall be saved." I know some ministers preach up doubts and fears so much that you would really think that doubting

was the way to heaven; and the more you could doubt and fear, the more proof there would be that you were a child of God! The fact is—the children of God *do* doubt and fear. I am sorry to say *all* of them, (no, not all of them—I question whether all of them do not, but still my brother says *he* does not, and I believe him. I fear, however, he will doubt one of these days. I hope he never may; but when he does, it will be very wrong and very wicked of him, indeed, just as it has been with me, and as it has been with you), for when we doubt, it is sin. Oh, cursed sin of unbelief—most damnable of sins, because it so stains God's honor, and so makes the enemy to blaspheme! "There," they say, "there is a man who cannot trust his God; a minister who cannot trust his God; a Christian who cannot repose upon the promise of the Almighty!" We cannot *measure* the guilt of sins—all sins are all base and vile—but there are crimes which we set down as being very heinous, which, I believe, are but little when compared with that which we think so trivial—the sin of doubting God and mistrusting His promise! If unbelief is like a thistle in the field, which proves that the soil is good, or it would not produce thistles—at any rate, that is no reason why you and I should sow thistle seed! Let us cut the thistles up if there are any, and may the Holy Spirit plant the evergreen fir of hope, the towering pine of love, and the hardy boxwood of faith! Trust in the Lord! "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice." Let your joy be full; be not cast down and troubled, but rejoice in Him evermore.

IV. I shall now pass on to a fourth point very briefly—"Is the Lord's hand waxed short?" This is a question which I may well ask of any here present who are **CONVICTED OF SIN, BUT ARE AFRAID TO TRUST THEIR SOULS NOW, AT THIS VERY HOUR, IN THE HANDS OF A LOVING SAVIOR.**

"Oh, He cannot save *me*; I am so guilty, so callous! Could I repent as I ought to; could I but feel as I ought; *then* He could

save me; but I am naked and poor, and miserable. How can He clothe, enrich, and bless *me*? I am cast out from His presence; I have grieved away His Spirit; I have sinned against light and knowledge—against mercy—against constant grace received. He cannot save me.” “*And the Lord said unto Moses, Is the Lord’s hand waxed short? You shall now see whether My word shall come to pass unto you or not.*” Did He not save the chief of sinners, Saul of Tarsus? Why, then, can He not save you? Is it not written, “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son, cleanses us from all sin”? Has that blood lost its efficacy? Have Christ’s merits lost their savor? Are they no more an offering of a sweet smell before the throne of God? Has His sacrifice lost its plea and the plea its authority? Is He no longer prevalent before the Father’s face? Soul! Soul! Soul! Would you add to your sin? Then doubt Christ’s power to save you! Would you seal your doom? Then, through this mock humility, distrust Christ. But would you be saved? Then dare, I pray you, in the teeth of all your sins, to trust my Master—

“He is able

He is willing; doubt no more.”

He is able, for He is God! What can He not perform? He is willing, for He was the slaughtered Man; and He who died, and had His heart pierced for us, cannot be unwilling! Do you wish to stab Him in the tenderest point, and vex Him? Then indulge that mean, ungenerous thought that He is unwilling to forgive! But would you wish to honor Him, and relieve yourself at the same time? Then step out of all appearances, all hopes and fears suggested by your own feelings! Come to the foot of His cross, and looking up into those eyes, full of languid pity, and to those hands streaming with precious blood, say, “Jesus, I believe! Help You my unbelief,” and so you shall see whether

He will not keep His word! If you should come to Him and He should refuse, then would He not have broken His promise? Did He not say, “Him who comes unto Me, I will in no wise cast out”? “But, O sir, I am so black a sinner! I am one of Satan’s castaways.” But what if you are? Christ did not make any exception! He said, “*Him who comes*,” and that means any, “him,” in the entire world who comes! If with weeping, and with supplication, mourning for past sins, you will go to Him now, poor sinner, you will find Him quite as good as His word, and you shall wonder and be astonished to find your own hardness of heart suddenly taken away, and all your load of guilt removed! Oh, I would that I had words, that this heart had language, and needed not to employ dull flesh with which to utter its thoughts! Soul, soul, my Lord is worthy of your faith! I trusted Him. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him! I looked unto Him and was lightened, and my face was not ashamed, and—

“Ever since by faith I saw the stream,
His flowing wounds supply;
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die!”

Oh, if you knew my Savior; if you knew Him, you *would* trust Him! Surely if you will but think of the tens of thousands who are around the throne, today, singing the song of divine grace, each one of these would seem to say to you, “sinner, trust Him. He was true to me.” If God’s people who are here this morning could stand up and speak, I know their testimony would be, “soul, trust Him—He has been good and true to me.” Ah, my Lord, why have You not cast some of us away long ago? When we think of our unbelief, and our repeated backsliding, the wonder is that You have not torn up the marriage-bond

and said, “He shall go—he shall go—he has rebelled against Me. He is as a backsliding heifer and as a bull unaccustomed to the yoke.” But no! The strong love of God which first laid hold of us has never let go its grip; He has kept us when we have forsaken Him; pardoned all our shortcomings, and blotted out all our trespasses! And here we are to bear witness that He is a God ready to forgive, passing by iniquity, transgression and sin! Sinner, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, I command you—believe on Christ and—“As though God did beseech you by me, I pray you, in Christ’s place, be reconciled to God.” Think not that He is hard towards you; Jehovah’s heart yearns to clasp His Ephraims to His breast! Prodigal! Your Father sees you—come, He will meet you—He’ll kiss you; He’ll clothe you; He’ll make a banquet for you. He will bring forth music and dancing; and His own heart will have the sweetest of the music in itself! Come, then, come, I pray you—trust Him and leaving all else behind, of good or bad which belongs to you—come empty to be filled! Come naked to be clothed!

V. I have but now one other point, and I shall not detain you, probably two moments, while I dwell upon it. The subject would not be complete without it. It has been said of some preachers of the Word, and especially of me, that we delight to preach damnation and the fires of hell. I think that all who have heard me constantly know that a more unfounded libel was never uttered against any living man! I *have* preached terrible sermons; they have been few and far between; but I have never preached them with tearless eyes! It has ever been to me a far greater misery to preach, than it has been to any to hear; and this last sentence or two, with which I conclude, is wrung from my very soul.

And you say, do you, that God will not avenge your sins upon you—that you may go on in your iniquities and yet meet with no punishment; that you may reject Christ and do it safely;

trample on His blood, and yet God is so calm that His anger will never flame forth against you? Well, soul. Well, soul, “You shall see whether His word shall come to pass or not.” But let me tell you His hand is not waxed short! He is as strong to punish as when He bade the floods cover the earth; as powerful to avenge as when He rained hail out of heaven upon the cities of the plain! He is today as mighty to overtake and punish His enemies as when He sent the angel through the midst of Egypt, or afterwards smote the hosts of Senacherib! You shall see whether He will keep His word or not—go on in the neglect of His great Salvation—go to your dying bed, and buoy yourself up with the false hope that there is no hereafter, no hell to come! But, sinner, you shall see. You *shall see*. This point in dispute shall not long be a matter of question to be laughed at on the one side, and to be taught with tears on the other. *You* shall see and *we* are willing enough, ourselves, to wait that time; only, soul, when *you* shall see, it will be too late to escape! When the fire gets hold upon *you*; when the hail of God begins to dash you in pieces, and there shall be none to deliver, where will your infidelity be then? Where your hard sayings against God’s earnest ministers, then? You will use another note, and sing another tune, and yell another cry! O God, grant that none among us may ever dare to doubt You, and think that You cannot and will not punish us! By Your grace may we come to the cross as sinners, and be saved, lest unhappily in the world to come when You say, “Depart you cursed,” we shall see whether God’s word shall come to pass unto us or not! May God add His own blessing for Jesus’ sake!—

“From where, then, shall doubts and fears arise?
Why trickling sorrows drown our eyes?
Slowly, alas, our mind receives
The comfort that our Maker gives.

Oh for a strong, a lasting faith,
To credit what the Almighty says!
To embrace the message of His Son,
And call the joys of heaven our own!
Then should the earth's old pillars shake,
And all the wheels of nature break,
Our steady souls should fear no more
Than solid rocks when billows roar!
Our everlasting hopes arise
Above the venerable skies,
Where the eternal Builder reigns,
And His own courts His power sustains.”

364 THE SHULAMITE'S CHOICE PRAYER – SONG. 8:6-7

**A Sermon
Delivered on Sabbath Evening, February 24th, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At New Park Street Chapel, Southwark**

**“Set me as a seal upon Your heart, as a seal upon Your arm:
for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: its
flames are flames of fire, a most vehement flame. Many waters
cannot quench Your love, nor can the floods drown it.” — Song
of Solomon 8:6-7**

THIS IS THE PRAYER of one who has the present enjoyment of fellowship with Christ. But, being apprehensive lest this communion should be interrupted, she avails herself of the opportunity now afforded her to plead for a something which shall be as the abiding token of a covenant between her and her beloved when His visible presence shall be withdrawn. You will notice that this is not the cry of a soul that is longing for fellowship, for that cry is—“Tell me O You whom my soul loves, where You feed.” It is not even the cry of the soul that has some fellowship and needs more, for then it would say, “Oh that You were as my brother!” Nor is it the cry of a soul that has had fellowship but has lost it, for that is, “Saw You Him, whom my soul loves?” And she goes “about the streets and in the broad ways” saying, “I will seek Him.” But this is the prayer of the spouse when she has been coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon His bosom. The thought strikes her,

that He who has sustained her is about to go from her, to depart and leave her for a season, because it is expedient and more useful for her, and she prays that since He is no more on the earth, but has entered into the ivory palaces where her God dwells, that He would be pleased to make a covenant with her never to forget her, and that He would give her some sign and mark by which she might be assured that she is very near to His heart, and still written upon His arm. I take it to be the prayer of the Church at the present day, now that Christ is before the Father's throne; the Bridegroom is not with us; He has left us; He has gone to prepare a place for us, and He is coming again. We are longing for His coming; we are saying in the language of the last verse of this song of songs, "Make haste, my beloved and be You like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices." Yet before He went, it seemed as if His Church did pray to Him, "Set me as a seal upon Your heart, as a seal upon Your arm." And this is the cry of the Church tonight, and I trust your cry too, that while He is not present, but is absent from you, you may be near to Him, and have a sweet consciousness of that blessed fact!

Now without further preface, let me first notice, *the prayer*, and secondly, *the reasoning with which the spouse argues her suit*. The prayer is, "Set me as a seal upon Your heart, as a seal upon Your arm." The argument is four-fold. She pleads thus, "Love is strong as death." She waxes bolder—"Jealousy is cruel as the grave." She wrestles again—"The flames thereof are flames of fire, a most vehement flame." And once again she brings forth her choice words, "Set me as a seal upon Your heart, for many waters cannot quench Your love, neither can the floods drown it."

I. THE PRAYER, you will notice, is two-fold, although it is so really and essentially one—"Set me as a seal upon Your heart, as a seal upon Your arm."

Now, I think I can perhaps explain this text best by a reference to the high priest of old. You know that when he put on his holy garments—those robes of glory and beauty—he wore the breastplate of cunning work in which four rows of precious stones were set. If you will turn to Exodus, the 39th chapter and 14th verse, you will read, “And the stones were according to the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names, like the engravings of a signet, everyone with his name, according to the twelve tribes.” How suggestive of this prayer!—“Set me as a seal or as an engraved signet, as a precious stone that has been carved—set my name upon Your breast.” Let it be always glittering there. But, beside this breastplate, there was the ephod, and we are told that, “They made shoulder pieces for it, to couple it together; by the two edges was it coupled together.” Then in the sixth verse we read, “And they set onyx stones enclosed in settings of gold; they were engraved, as signets are engraved, with the names of the children of Israel. And he put them on the shoulders of the ephod, that they should be stones for a memorial to the children of Israel. As the Lord commanded Moses.” So that it was set as a signet upon his shoulder, or upon his arm, as well as upon his heart. I think these were to indicate that the high priest loved the people, for he bore them on his heart; and that he served the people as a consequence of that love, therefore he bore them upon his shoulders. And I think the prayer of the spouse is just this—she would know once and for all that Christ’s heart is entirely hers; that He loves her with the intensity, and the very vitality of His being; that His inmost heart, the life-spring of His soul, belongs to her. And she would also know that that love moves His arm. She longs to see herself as supported, sustained, strengthened, defended, preserved and kept by that same strong arm which put Orion in its place in the sky, and holds the Pleiades that they should

give their light forevermore. She longs that she may know the love of His heart, and that she may experience the power of His arm. Can we not, each of us, join the spouse in this prayer tonight? Oh, Lord, let me know that my name is engraved on Your heart, not only let it be there, but let me *know* it. Write my name not only in Your heart, but may it be as a signet on Your heart that I may *see* it. Doubtless, there are the names of very many written upon Christ's heart, who have not yet been able to see their names there—they are there, but not written as on a signet. Christ has loved them from all eternity; His heart has been set on them from everlasting, but as yet, they have never seen the signet. They have never had the seal of the Spirit to witness within that they are born of God! While their names may be in His heart, they have not seen them there as a *seal* upon His heart; and no doubt there are multitudes for whom Christ has fought and conquered, and whom He daily keeps and preserves, who have never seen their names written as a seal upon His arm. Their prayer is that they may see Christ's love *visibly*; that they may discover it in their experience; that it may be beyond a question, and no more a matter of doubt—that His hand and His heart are engaged for their eternal salvation! I repeat it, you can all join in this prayer, you people of God—it is a cry that you can put up now, and continue to put up till it is fully answered. Oh, let me know, my Lord, that I am Yours, bound to Your heart, and let me know that I am Yours, protected and preserved by Your arm! This is the prayer. I shall not say more upon it because I wish to speak more at length upon the arguments with which it is here pleaded.

II. The spouse argues with her Lord thus. It is to my advantage that You should thus write my name upon Your hand and heart, for I know this concerning Your love, that it is *strong*; that it is *firm*; that it has a wondrous *intensity*, and that it

is sure and unquenchable for *eternity*. With these four pleas she backs up her suit.

1. She pleads that He would show her His love, because of *the strength of it*. “Your love is strong as death.” Some expositors think that this means the Church’s love. Others say, “No, it means the love of Christ to His Church.” I will not try to determine which it means, for they are extremely like each other. Christ’s love to His Church is the magnificent image—the affection which His people bear to Him is the beautiful miniature. They are not alike in degree and measure, for the Church never loves Christ as much as Christ loves her, but they are as much alike as the father, in his strength, is to the baby in its weakness. There is the same image and superscription. The love of the Church to Christ is the child of Christ’s love to the Church, and consequently, there is something of the same attribute in both. And while it is true that Christ’s love to us is so strong that He did defy and endure death for us, it is also true that the love of the Church to Him is as strong as death. Her chosen sons and daughters have endured the pangs of the rack, and the pains of the sword, and have gone through a thousand deaths sooner than be turned aside from their chaste fidelity to their Lord! I shall, however, keep to the first idea that this is the *love of Christ*, and shall use it thus, as being the plea of His Church that because His love is strong, she desires to be certified of her interest in it, and to see most visibly the signet and seal of her being really in His heart. “Love is as strong as death.” What a well-chosen emblem this is! What besides love is as strong as death? With steadfast foot Death marches over the world; no mountains can restrain the invasion of this all-conquering king! There is no chalet on the mountain Alp so high that his foot cannot climb to hunt the inhabitant; there is no valley so fair that he does not intrude and stalk—a grim skeleton across the plain. Everywhere and in every place

beneath the moon have you sway, O Death! The lordly lion bows his neck to you; Leviathan yields up his corpse which floats many a crucifix upon the briny waves. You are the great fisher; you have put your hook into his jaw, and dragged him from the sea. Master of all are you! You have dominion given unto you; you wear an iron crown, and you dash in pieces as though they were but potter's vessels, the strongest of the sons of men! None among the sons of Adam can withstand Death's insidious advances! When his hour is come, none can bid him delay. The most clamorous prayers cannot move the flinty heart of Death. Insatiable and not to be appeased, he devours and devours forever! That scythe is never blunted, that hourglass never ceases to flow. Mightiest among the mighty are you, O Death! But Christ's love is strong as death! It too can climb the mountain, and lay hold upon the mountaineer far removed from the sound of the ministration of the Gospel. It too can march into the valley. And though Popery with all its clouds of darkness should cover it, yet the love of Christ can win its glorious way! What can stand against the love of Christ? The stoutest must yield to it, and adamant hearts are dashed to shivers by one blow of its golden hammer! As the sun dissolves the chains of frost, and bids the wind rush on in freedom—though once bound as if it were stone—so does this love of Christ, wherever it comes, give life and joy and liberty, snap the bonds, and win its way, never being retarded, never being hindered, because it is written, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Who can measure the strength of Christ's love? Men have defied it, but their defiance has been overcome! They have long resisted, but they have been compelled to throw down their weapons; they have crossed it, but they have found it hard to kick against the pricks; they have gone on caring for none of these things, but thus the eternal

counsel has decreed it—Christ must—He shall have that redeemed man, and He has had him! Jesus Christ's love is strong as death! Sooner might a man live, after God's will had decreed that he should die, than a sinner remain impenitent one hour after God's love had decreed to melt his heart! Sooner might you defy the grave and hurl back upon his haunches, the pale horse of Death, than turn back the Holy Spirit when He comes in His divine omnipotence to lay hold upon the heart and soul of man! As all the owls and bats with all their hoots could not scare back the sun when once its hour to rise has come—so all the sins and fears, and troubles of man cannot turn back the light of love when God decrees that it should shine upon the heart! Stronger than death, His love is found! Death is but weakness itself when compared with the love of Christ! What a sweet reason why I should have a share in it! What a blessed argument for me to use before the throne of God! Lord, if Your love is so strong, and my heart is so hard, and myself so powerless to break it, oh let me know Your love, that it may overcome me, that it may enchain me with its sure but soft fetters, and that I may be Your willing captive forevermore!

But, let us notice here that when the spouse says that Christ's love is strong as death, you must remember that she may in faith have foreseen that it would one day be tried which was the stronger. You know, do you not, that these two once entered into the lists to try their strength? And it was a struggle upon which angels gazed. Jesus—I mean incarnate love—at the first seemed to shrink before Death. "He sweat as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground." You cannot see the brow of His antagonist, but could you have perceived it, Death—the invaded—was trembling more than Christ—the invader! Christ had the prophecy of victory, but Death—the fates were against it. Do you remember that story of how the Savior's back was

plowed, His hands pierced, and His side opened? Death—I think I see the flush that crossed his pale face as he thought that he had gained the victory—but Jesus triumphed—love reigned while Death lays prostrate at His feet! Strong as Death indeed was Jesus' love, for Jesus swallowed up Death in victory! Not merely overcame it, but seemed to devour it; to make nothing of it, and put it away once and for all. "O Death," said Love, "I will be your plague! O grave, I will be your destruction!" And Love has kept its word, and proved itself to be "strong as Death."

Well, beloved, we may add to these few remarks this word. Rest assured that as Death will not give up its prey, so neither will Love. How hard and firm does Death hold its captives! Till that resurrection trumpet shall make him loose their bonds, none shall go free! Their ashes he preserves as carefully as a king keeps the jewels of his crown; he will not allow one of them to escape, as did Israel out of the land of Pharaoh. In the house of bondage, there they must lie. And is not Christ's love as strong as this? He shall keep His own. Those who are His, He never will let go. No, when the archangel's trumpet shall dissolve the grasp of Death, then shall be heard the cry, "Father, I will that they also whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am." And when Death itself is dead, Love shall prove its eternal strength by taking its captives home. Love, then, is strong as Death. Lord Jesus, let me feel that love; let me see Your arm nerved with it, and Your heart affected by this strong love which all my enemies cannot defeat; which all my sins cannot overturn; which all my weakness cannot deny. I think this is a most sweet and powerful argument to lead you to pray the prayer, and one which you will use when you are pleading before God.

2. Let us now turn to the second plea—"Jealousy is cruel as the grave." Krummacher, in a sermon upon this passage,

following the translation of Luther, quotes it as though it ran thus—"Jealousy is firm as hell." And I believe that such is the proper translation, at least quite as correct as the present one. "Jealousy is firm as hell." Those of you who have Bibles with the margins in them, (and the margins are generally like fine gold), will perceive the words in the corner, "Hebrew, hard"—"Jealousy is *hard* as the grave," which is just the idea of firmness, it is as firm as the grave. *Sheol*, I believe the word is here for *grave*, otherwise we translate it, "Hades"—or as Luther translates it—"hell." "Jealousy is hard as hell." The idea is just this—that the love of Christ in the form of jealousy is as hard and as sternly relentless as is the grave and hell. Now hell never loses one of its bond-slaves. Once let the iron gate be shut upon the soul, and there is no escape. When the ring of fire has once girdled the immortal spirit, none can dash through the flaming battlements. The dungeon is locked. The key is dashed into the abyss of destiny and can never be found—

"Fixed is their everlasting state,
Could they repent, 'tis now too late."

"Escape for your life, look not behind you," is a cry which may be uttered on earth, but which can never be heard in hell! They, who are once there, are there forever and forever. That modern doctrine of the restoration of damned souls has no foundation in the Word of God; it is a dream, and they shall find it so who once go into that place! "Where their worm dies not, and where their fire is not quenched"—a more perfect picture of an unrelenting seizure could not be found anywhere! The firmness and hardness of the grave and hell are without abatement; when once they have got their hands upon their prey, they hold it with a tenacity which defies resistance. Well, but such is the love of Christ! If just now we had to speak of

its strength, we have now to speak of its tenacity, its hardness, its attachment to those whom it has chosen. You may sooner unlock Hades, and let loose the spirits that are in prison there, than you could ever snatch one from the right hand of Christ! You may sooner rob Death of its prey, than Jesus of His purchased ones; you may spoil the lion's den, but shall the lion of the tribe of Judah be spoiled? Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive delivered? Before one child of God shall be lost, you shall go first and make Death relax his grasp, and then, next, you shall make hell with all its fury give up its prey! As soon as ever it can be proved that one child of God perishes, it can be proved that the fires of hell can be put out—but, until then, there shall never be a shadow of a fear of that. As certainly as lost souls are lost, so certainly believing souls are saved! Oh, little do they know the love of Christ, who think that He loves today and hates tomorrow! He is no such lover as that—even earthly worms would despise such affection! Is Christ's affection a play of fast and loose? Does He choose and then refuse? Does He justify and then condemn? Does He press to His bosom, and afterwards reject with distaste? It is not so! Some mighty imagination might conceive Niagara Falls staying its course, and made to ascend and climb the hills, instead of leaping downwards in its strength; but even then, no imagination can conceive the love of Christ retracing its eternal pathway! The divine fury which is in it, drives it on, and on it must go as it has begun; the love of Christ is like an arrow which had been shot from the bow of destiny; it flies, it flies, and heaven itself cannot change its course! Christ has decreed it—such men shall be His, and His they shall be! Nor will He turn away one of them, or make a new election, or plan a new redemption, or bring those to heaven whom He never intended to bring, or lose those whom He ordained to save! He has said, and He will do it. He has commanded His covenant

forever, and it shall stand fast. He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion, and He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy! You have then, here, another reason why you should pray that your name may be upon Christ and upon His arm—once there, it is there forever! It is so surely there, so jealously there, so strongly there, so fixedly there, that it can never be removed, come what may! Christ is jealous of His people; He will not let another have His spouse; He will not sit still and see the Prince of Darkness walking off with her whom He espoused unto Himself in the eternal ages. The supposition is absurd! That cruel jealousy of His would make Him start up from His heavenly repose to snatch His chosen spouse from him who would seek to lead her to the hellish altar! She shall not be divorced from Him; she must not be married to another—

“Stronger His love than death or hell,
Its riches are unsearchable!
The first-born sons of light
Desire in vain its depths to see;
They cannot reach the mystery,
The length, the breadth, the height.”

3. If the love of Christ is strong as death; it is such that it can never be moved from its objective, yet the question still arises, “May not the love itself die out? Even should it abide the same in its purpose, yet may not its intensity be diminished?” “No,” says the Shulamite, “it is an attribute of Christ’s love that the flames thereof are flames of fire which have a most vehement flame.” More forcible is the language of the original—“The coals thereof are the coals of God”—a Hebrew idiom to express the most glowing of all flames—“The coals of God”! As though it were no *earthly* flame, but something far

superior to the most vehement affection among men! Some who look carefully at it think there is an allusion in this sentence to the fire which always burnt at the altar, and which never went out. You remember there were coals of fire which were always kept burning under the Levitical dispensation. The flame was originally kindled by fire from heaven, and it was the business of the priest to perpetually feed it with the sacred fuel. You will remember, too, that one of the cherubim flew and took a live coal from off this very altar and said to Isaiah, “Lo, this has touched your lips.” Now, the love of Christ is like the coals upon the altar which never went out. But, the spouse has brought out a fuller idea than this. She seems to say, “Its vehemence never decreases; it is always burning to its utmost intensity.” Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace was heated seven times hotter, but no doubt it grew cool. Christ’s love is like the furnace, but it is always at the seven-fold heat, and it always has within itself its own fuel! It is not merely like fire, but like coals of fire, always having that within itself which supports it! Why did Christ love the spouse? What first lit the fire? He kindled it Himself! There was no reason whatever why Christ should love any of us, except the love of His own heart. And what is the fuel that feeds the fire? Your works and mine? No, brothers and sisters, no, no, a thousand times no! All the fuel comes from the same place—it is all from His heart! Now, if the flame of Christ’s love depended upon anything *we* did—if it were fed with *our* fuel—it would either die out, or else it would sometimes dwindle as the smoking flax—and then, again, it might kindle to a vehement heat. But since it depends on *itself*, and has the pure attributes of divinity, it is a self-existent love, absolute and independent of the creature. Well, then, may we understand that it never shall grow less, but always be as a vehement flame!

Now, I do not want to preach about this, but I wish you would think of it a little. Christian, turn it over in your mind—Christ loves you; not a little; not a little as a man may love his friend; not even as a mother may love her child, for she *may* forget the infant of her womb. He loves you with the highest degree of love that is possible! And what more can I say, except I add, He loves you with a degree of love that is utterly impossible to man; no finite mind could, if it should seek to measure it, get any idea whatever of the love of Christ towards us! You know, when we come to measure a drop with an ocean, there is a comparison. A comparison, I say, there is, though we should hardly be able to get at it! But when you attempt to measure our love with Christ's—the finite with the Infinite—there is *no comparison* at all! Though we loved Christ ten thousand times as much as we do, there would even then, be no comparison between our love to Him, and His love to us! Can you now believe this—"Jesus loves me"? Why, to be loved by others here often brings the tear to one's eyes. It is sweet to have the affection of one's fellow; but to be loved of *God*, and to be loved at an intense degree—so loved that you have to leave it as a mystery the soul cannot fathom—you cannot tell how much! Be silent, O my soul, and be you silent, too, before your God, and lift up your soul in prayer thus—"Jesus, take me into this sea of love, and let me be ravished by a sweet and heavenly contentment in a sure confidence that You have loved me and given Yourself for me."

4. We shall now turn to the last argument of this choice prayer, which is equally precious. It is the *unquenchable eternity of this love*. There is that in its very essence which defies any opposite quality to extinguish it. The argument seems to me to run thus—"Yes, but if Christ's love does not die out of itself—if it has such intensity that it never would of itself fail, yet may not you and I put it out?" No, says the text, "Many waters

cannot quench love; neither can the floods drown it.” Christ has endured many waters already—the waters of bodily affliction, the waters of soul travail, the waters of spiritual desertion. Christ was in this world like Noah’s ark—the depths that came up from beneath hell troubled Him; the great floods came from above; it pleased the Father to bruise Him. The waterfalls leaped on Him from either side; He was betrayed by His friends; He was hunted by His foes. But the many waters could no more destroy His love than it could drown the Ark of gopher wood! Just as that ark mounted higher and higher, and higher, the more the floods prevailed—so then that love of Christ seemed to rise higher and higher, and higher—just in proportion to the floods of agony which sought to put it out! Fixed and resolved to bring His ransomed people home, the captain of our salvation becomes perfect through suffering, plunges into the thick of the battle, and comes out of it more than conqueror! And oh, since then, my beloved, what floods has Christ’s love endured! There have been the floods of our sins; the many waters of our blasphemy and ungodliness. Since conversion there have been the many waters of our backslidings, and the floods of our unbelief. What crime on crime—what transgression on transgression have we been guilty of! Yet He has never failed us up to this moment. “By the grace of God we are what we are. And we are persuaded that neither life, nor death, nor things present, nor things to come, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor height, nor depth nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” What if we should be tried in circumstances? “Neither famine, nor persecution, nor nakedness, nor peril, nor sword shall separate from the love of Christ.” What if we backslide, and wander from His ways? “Though we believe not, He abides faithful.” And what if in the last black hour we should have bitter

sufferings on the dying bed? Still He shall be with us in the last moment, for it is written, “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is Death.” So you see, Death is to be destroyed, and we are to be victors over him! Gather up, then, all the thoughts of how we have tried, and how we *shall* try the Master, and let us set to our seal tonight our own solemn, “Yes and Amen” to this most precious declaration of the Shulamite—“Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.” Then, Lord, write my name on Your heart, engrave my name as a signet on Your arm that I may have a share in this unfailing and undying affection and be Yours now and forever!

Poor sinner! I know you have been saying while I have been preaching thus—“I wish I had a share in that love.” Well, *this* prayer *you* may pray tonight—“Set me, Lord—set me as a seal upon Your heart, as a seal upon Your arm. Love me, Lord. Help me, Lord. Let Your heart move towards me; let Your arm move for me, too. Think of me, Lord; set me on Your heart. Lord, set me on Your arm; Lord, I long to have Your love, for I hear it is strong as death, and You know I am chained by Satan, and I am his bondsman. Come and deliver me—You are more than a match for my cruel tyrant; come with Your strong love and set me free. I hear that Your love is firm, too, as hell itself. Lord, that is such a love as I need; though I know I shall vex You, and wander from You, come and love me with a love that is firm and everlasting! O Lord, I feel there is nothing in me that can make You love me; come and love me, then, with that love which finds its own fuel! love me with those coals of fire which have a vehement flame; and since many waters cannot quench Your love, prove that in me. Lord there are many waters of sin in me; but Lord, help me to believe that Your love is not quenched by them. There are many corruptions in me; but Lord, love me with that love which my corruptions cannot quench. Here, Lord, I give myself away—

take me! Make me what You would have me to be, and keep
and preserve me even to the end.”

May the Lord help you to pray that prayer, and then may
He answer it for His mercy's sake.

365 HUMILITY – ACTS 20:19

A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Morning, March 17th, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At Exeter Hall, Strand

“Serving the Lord with all humility of mind.” — Acts 20:19

IT IS NOT OFTEN that a man may safely speak about his own humility. Humble men are mostly conscious of great pride, while those who are boastful of humility have nothing but false pretense, and really lack and need it. I question whether any of us are at all judges as to our pride or humility; for verily, pride so often assumes the shape of lowliness when it has its own end to serve, and lowliness, on the other hand, is so perfectly compatible with a heavenly dignity of decision, that it is not easy at all times to discover which is the counterfeit and which is the precious and genuine coin. You will remember that, in the case in our text, Paul speaks by Inspiration. If it were not for this fact, I would not have believed even Paul, himself, when he spoke of his own humility. So distrustful do I feel of our judgment upon this point, that if he had not spoken under the infallible witness and guidance of the Holy Spirit, I would have said that the text was not true. When a *man* says he serves God with humbleness of mind, speaking merely from his own judgment, there is clear proof before you that he is a proud man! But Paul speaks not to his own commendation, but with the sole motive of clearing his hands of the blood of all men. Led, no doubt, by the Holy Spirit thus to speak—that he might

be an example to all coming ages—he becomes the mirror to all the ministers of Christ that we, too, each of us in our degree serving the Lord, may without degree be filled with humility, taking the lowest seat, not esteeming ourselves beyond what we ought to think, but submitting ourselves to men of low estate—emptying out ourselves as He did who emptied Himself of all His glory, when He came to save our souls.

I shall take the text this morning, and shall speak of it as the Lord shall please to help me in my weakness. First, I shall speak *of the comprehensiveness of humility*. You notice the text says, “Serving the Lord with *all* humility.” Secondly, I shall speak *upon the trials to which our humility will be subjected*; and thirdly, *upon the arguments by which we ought to support it*, to generate it, and to sustain it in our souls. And then, fourthly, I shall show forth *some practical effects of humility*, and urge you to show them forth with me in our daily lives.

I. First then, the COMPREHENSIVENESS OF HUMILITY.

It is a somewhat striking expression; it is not merely serving the Lord with humility, but serving the Lord with *all* humility. There are many sorts of pride. Perhaps while I am running over the list, you will be able, by looking at the contrast, to see that there must also be many kinds of humility.

There is the pride of the *heretic* who will utter false doctrines because he thinks his own judgment to be better than the Word of God; never content to sit like a child to believe what he is told, he is a disputant but not a disciple. He will insist upon it that his own reason is to be the well-spring of his own beliefs, and he will receive nothing beyond his own reach. Now, Paul never had the heretic’s pride. He could say, “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” No, so willing was he to sit at the feet of Jesus that he counted all the learning which he had received before he sat at the feet of Jesus to be of no value! He spoke not with the wisdom of

words, nor with human learning, but with the demonstration of the Spirit and with power.

There is next the pride of the *Papist*, who attaches merit to his own works, and hopes to win heaven as the reward of his own doings. From this Paul was totally free. He had humility which is the very contrast of it. Often did he say, when speaking of himself, “Yet not I, but Christ.” He learned to count his righteousness as filthy rags, and all his former doings were to him but dross and dung that he might win Christ and be found in Him.

Next, there is the pride of the *curious*. The man who is not content with simplicities, but must pry into mysteries; he would, if he could, climb to the Eternal Throne, and read between those folded leaves, and break the seven seals of the mysterious book of destiny. You know well our apostle has many things in his writings which are hard to be understood, yet he uttered them because of the Spirit; you never meet with any attempt in the apostle’s writing—as you do in the preaching of some ministers, and as you do in the conversation of some professors—to reconcile predestination with free will. He was quite content to preach to men as free agents, and exhort them to repent; quite willing to speak of God as working in us to will and do of His good pleasure, while we also work out our own Salvation with fear and trembling. Paul was never curious to find out where the lines of truth met; he was perfectly content to take his doctrine from his Master’s Spirit, and leave the old wives’ fables, and endless genealogies and disputes, and questionings, to those who had no better guests to entertain.

Again—there is the pride of the *persecutor*; the man who is not content with his own notions, but would hunt to death another; the pride which suggests that I am infallible, and that if any man should differ from me—the stake and the rack would be the due deserts of so great a sin against so great a

person as myself! Now, the apostle acted towards those who differed with him with the greatest wisdom and kindness, and though full often he was beaten with rods, or subjected to false brethren, and hauled before the magistrates, I think he had none of the spirit of Elijah that would bring down fire from heaven upon any man. He was kind, and had that charity which suffers long and hopes all things, and endures all things, and believes all things. In this, too, you have an instance of *all* humility. He had the humility of a man of generous spirit.

And there is the pride of the *impenitent* man who will not yield to God. He says, “I am free; I was never under dominion to any; my neck has never felt the rein, my jaw has never felt the bit.” Not so our apostle. He was always humble, teachable, and filled even to sorrowfulness with a sense of his own unworthiness. “Oh, wretched man that I am,” he said, “who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Far enough was he from rebellion against the Most High God; for he would sit at the feet of Christ and learn, yes, and he would lie at the foot of the throne in dust and ashes, and confess himself to be the very chief of sinners, and less than the least of all the saints! I think you will very soon learn from the contrast I have presented to you, what the apostle meant when he said, “in *all* humility.” There are many sorts of pride. There are many sorts of humility, too. The apostle had them all; or rather they were blended together in a sweet mixture in his daily preaching and conversation. I hope this morning to give you a clearer view of the comprehensiveness of humility, and so I will put it to you in another shape.

Some of the old writers, who like to use terms to sound very much alike, say, There is a *proposed* humility, or humility before the service of God; there is an *opposed* humility, or humility during the service of God which continues under trial; and there is, thirdly, an *imposed* humility, when the soul,

conscious of sin during the act, imposes upon itself the task of bending before God, and offering repentance for its sin. Not caring much for these terms, because I think that old writers went out of their way to make them, I will be content with the substance. There is humility *before* serving God. When a man lacks this, he proposes to himself his own honor, and his own esteem in serving God. How easy is it for us to preach a sermon, having our eyes upon our hearers, hoping that they will be satisfied with us, and will say, “He spoke right well—the man is an orator; he is eloquent.” Yes, and how easy it is to propose to please yourself so that you may be able to say as you come down from the rostrum, “I have not failed today in my own judgment, and I am satisfied with myself.” This is pride before service, and it will mar everything! If we do not come to God’s altar humbly, we cannot come acceptably. Whether we preach or pray, or give alms, or whatever we do, it is necessary that we bend exceedingly low before we enter upon the work; for if not, self-seeking and self-glorifying will lie at the bottom of all, and God neither can nor will accept us.

Look at too many Christians! How little of that *humility before service* they have. They will pick that position in the Church which will give them the most honors; and if there is work to do which will confer no position upon them, they leave that to others. If you require a man to occupy an honorable position in the Church, you can find scores; but if you need one who shall be a menial in the house of God—who shall be the least in God’s heritage—how difficult to find one! We are so pleased with the glitter of publicity, and the glory of man’s esteem, that I doubt not that in us all there is time of choosing our position for the *honor’s* sake, rather than for God’s sake! But it was never so with the apostle Paul. I think I see him now, working long past midnight making his tents, taking stitch after stitch with his needle through the hard canvas, and working away to

provide for his own individual needs, because an ungracious people held back the laborer's reward. Then, I see that tent maker going into the pulpit with his hands all blistered with his hard work, as rough as a laborer's hands. You would say of him at once, in getting up to speak, *that* man never proposes to himself the praises of his hearers! He is not like the Grecian orator who will go anywhere to get applause, turn aside to tell any tale, or to preach anything if he can but excite his audience to say, "He is an orator! Let us write him down among the great names; let us put the crown upon his head, and celebrate him through the midst of Greece as being the goldenmouthed man who can speak right mightily, as if the bees of Hybla had hived their honey upon his lips!" Never could you see that in Paul; you could discover at once that his solitary aim was to win souls, and so to glorify Christ. Let us labor after this as a part of *all* humility.

But again—there is in the next place *humility during the act*. When a man finds that God is with him, he may be base enough to glorify himself. He may have been very humble, indeed, when he began the battle, but there is one enemy there at his feet, and another has just been dashed down by a blow from his right hand. The Evil One whispers in his ear, "You have done well; you are doing well." And then pride comes in and spoils all! That is a splendid psalm which begins, "Not unto us." David thought it necessary to say it twice. "Not unto us, O Lord! Not unto us." Then he deals the deathblow with the other sentence, "But unto Your name be all the glory." To sing that song when you are trampling on your foes; to sing that song when you are reaping the great harvest; to sing that song when God's people are fed under your ministry; to sing that when you are going on from strength to strength, conquering and to conquer, will prove a healthy state of heart! Nothing but the most extraordinary grace can keep us in our right position

while we are serving God and God is honoring us. We are so inclined to steal His jewels from the crown, to put them on our own breasts; if we would not steal the diadem itself, yet we look with longing eyes upon it as if we would like to wear it if but a single moment. I have thought, sometimes, how many Christians are like the son of Henry the Fourth, who when his father lies asleep, puts the crown on his head. You and I have done the same; we have forgotten God; He was to us as one who sleeps, and we began to put the crown on our own head. Oh, fools that we were! Our time for crown-wearing has not come! We do but anger our Father, and bring grief into our spirits when we think of crowning ourselves, instead of crowning Him; worshipping our own image instead of bending before the Lord God Jehovah.

Christian men and women, and especially you, O my own soul, let us take heed that while serving God, we serve Him as the angels do who cover their faces, and cover their feet while they fly upon His errands!

Then, there is another kind of humility to make up all humility—*humility after the service is done*. In looking back upon success achieved, upon heights attained, upon efforts which have been blest, it is so easy to say, “My right hand and my mighty arm have gotten me the victory.” Men generally allow their fellow creatures some little congratulation. Can a man congratulate you without admitting that you may congratulate yourself? Now, there is respect and honor to be given to the man of God who has served his race and his Master. By all manner of means, let the names of Luther and Calvin and Zwingli be held in honor. Has not God Himself said it?—“The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance.” It was wrong in us if we did not honor God’s servants, for it would seem as if we dishonored the Master. But it will never do for the servant of God to honor *himself*! After his work is done, he

must lay his head upon his death pillow, saying, “I am not worthy of the least of all Your mercies! What am I, and what is my father’s house, that You have brought me here? I am, having done all, but an unprofitable servant; I have not even done as much as it was my duty to have done.” Sunday school teachers, tract distributors, visitors of the sick, you that feed the hungry and clothe the naked—especially you deacons and elders, ministers of the church—see to it that you never, when your work is done, speak of yourselves or of your work. No; your brethren, even if you speak in apparently humble terms, will soon find, when you talk much of what you do, that you are proud of it. You may think that you have misled them, but you certainly have not; much less have you deceived your God! Take care that you put your finger on your own beauty. When you are painting another man, imitate Apelles, who drew Alexander with his finger upon the scar; but when you are painting yourself, put your finger over your choice beauty, for depend upon it that the hiding finger of your modesty will be more beautiful than the beauty you conceal! Labor, then, for God’s sake, for the Church’s sake, for your own sake, to serve the Lord with all humility—humility *before* the act, humility *during* the service, and humility when all is done—“Serving the Lord with all humility of mind.”

II. But, secondly, the **TRIALS OF HUMILITY**, or the dangers through which humility has to pass.

And first and foremost, one of the trials to which humility will be exposed is the possession of great ability. When a man has seven talents, he must remember that he has seven burdens, and he who has ten, if he has more than others, should feel that he has ten times any other man’s burden of responsibility; and, therefore, he should be bowed down. Let a man feel that he possesses more power than another, more eloquence, more mental acumen, more learning, more imagination, and he is so

apt to sit down and say, “I am something; I am somebody in the church.” Yes, one may indeed speak with solemnity here. It is so ridiculous for us to ever boast of any talents which God has given us. It is as though the debtor in the jail should say, “I am a better man than you, for I am in debt 10,000 pounds, and you only a hundred.” The more we *have*, the more we *owe*, and how can there be any ground for boasting there? A man might as well be proud because he is six feet high, while another is only five feet, six inches, as be proud that he has 10 talents, while another has only five. We are what God has made us, as far as gifts are concerned. If the Lord said to Moses, “Who has made man’s mouth?” because Moses said he was of stammering speech, you may say that to yourselves if you can speak well. Or if you act well, “Who has made man’s arm?” Or if you think well, “Who has made man’s brain?” The honor never can be to the *thing* itself, but to that Mighty One *who made it* what it is! Great talents make it hard for a man to maintain humility. Shall I surprise you when I say that little talents have precisely the same effect? I have seen in my short time, some of the biggest men I ever set my eyes upon who were the smallest insects that were ever subjected to the microscope; some great men in the pulpit, too—stately, dignified, magnificent, majestic—men of whom a fortune could have been made outright if you could but have bought them at their proper value and sold them at what, in their opinion, they were worth; men who were only fit to be bishops—they never could have been the inferior clergy—a curate’s place would have been utterly insignificant! To have been a tent-maker or an ordinary preacher like Paul would have been far beneath their level. They always have the idea that they were born on a very fortunate day, and that the world owes them the utmost consideration and respect merely for their doing human beings the honor of living in the midst of them, though there is

nothing very much they have ever done! Now little talents often make a man proud. “There,” he says, “I have but a trifle in the world, I must make a flare with it. I have but one ring, and I will always put the finger that wears that, outwards, so that it may be seen.” It is a very common habit of all people who wear rings to keep the fingers on which they wear them always exposed to view, especially if they have only one ring! If a man has no gold in his pocket, he is sure to put on gold cuff links; and if a man has scarcely any wealth at all, he is sure to put it on his back, because he must keep up a position, and that position, never having been his rightful position, he is obliged to maintain at great cost.

Now, if you have little talents, and feel you have, do not swell and burst with envy. The frog was never contemptible as a frog, but when he tried to blow himself out to the size of the bull in the meadow, and *then* he was contemptible, indeed! I have frequently had this observation made to me in the most pompous manner by some little minister, “Oh, sir, I feel the danger of your position, and I always make it a matter of prayer to God that you may be kept humble.” I am exceedingly obliged to the gentleman, but I am sure I could make it a matter of prayer for him, that he might be made humble, once in his life, by way of a change—for he has never yet known what humility is so far as he was personally concerned. Now, you know very well that it is just as easy for a man to be proud in his rags, as my Lord Mayor in his gold chain. There is many a proud one riding in his little cart quite as vain as my lord who rides in a gilded coach. Indeed, I dare say he, the last one, feels very little pride, but very great shame at having to make himself so ridiculous! You may be a king and yet be humble; you may be a beggar and yet be proud; you may be great and yet little in your own esteem; you may be little and yet you may be greater in your estimation than those who are the greatest! See to it,

then, that your low estate does not make you proud any more than your high estate.

Again, success often has a very sorry influence upon humility. The man was humble before his God, till God had given him the great victory over the Moabites, but then his heart was lifted up within him, and the Lord forsook him. When he was little in Israel, he bowed before the Most High; when he became great, he exalted himself. Great success is like a full cup, it is hard to hold it with a steady hand. It is swimming in deep waters, and there is always a fear of being drowned. It is standing on the top of the pinnacle of the temple, and Satan often says, "Cast yourself down." But on the other hand, lack of success has just the same tendency. Have you not seen the man who could not get a congregation, and who insisted that it was because he was a better preacher than the man who did? I sometimes read a magazine, the message of which is this—if you want to be a good preacher, you must preach according to the outlines which are given you in this magazine! There are some who do this, but still find their chapels empty; then says the magazine with all complacency—"The men who get the congregations are always the weakest men; they are always the men who have the least mental power, while we who have but a few, a mere handful—we are the intellectual people." "The mob always will," they say, "run after the foolish men." So that the brother who gets no success, comforts himself with this thought—that providence is quite wrong, and that the Christian public are quite mistaken that *he* ought to be, if things had been right, the most popular man living, and that it is quite a mistake he is not. Now, lack of success has a very great influence on some men to make them feel, "Well, if I cannot succeed in getting other people to think me somebody, I will think everybody else, nobody, and I will elevate myself above them all in my own opinion." Now, I am speaking some home-

truths. I have received a deal of advice, myself, and I think I may sometimes take the liberty of giving it to others. I hope that those who are always thinking of success as certainly involving pride, may also take to themselves the comfortable reflection that their non-success, suggesting as it may very bitter thoughts about their Brothers, may also be pride, only in another direction!

But then, again; long enjoyment of the Master's presence has a tendency to make us proud. To walk all day in the sunlight brings us in danger of sunstroke. Better not sit too near the fire, or one may get scorched. If we have nothing but full assurance, we may come to be presumptuous. There is nothing like the heat of summer to breed putrefaction. When you have long-continued joys, fear and tremble for all the goodness of God. But on the other hand, long-continued doubts will breed pride. When a man has long been doubting God, and mistrusting His promise, what is that but pride? He needs to be somebody and something. He is not willing to believe his God in the dark—he thinks, in fact, that God deals harshly with him, in allowing him to be in despondency at all! He thinks he always ought to have joy and satisfaction, and so it comes to pass that his doubts and fears are as ready parents of pride, as assurance could have been. In fact, to cut short a very long story, for I might go on with these two sides of the question all morning, there is not a position in the world where a man cannot be humble if he has *divine grace*; there is not a station under heaven where a man will not be proud if left to *himself*; I pray you, never think that leaving one station and getting into another will be any help to your humility. 'Tis true the peasant boy in the valley of humiliation sang—

“He who is down need fear no fall
He who is low no pride,

He who is humble ever shall
Have God to be his guide.”

But I dare say that very same boy was sometimes singing in that very valley, songs of despondency, psalms of pride, and wicked rebellion against his God! It is not the *place*, it is the *heart*! It is not the *position*, but the *grace*! That man is as safe on a pinnacle, as on level ground if God holds him up; and he is as much in danger in the valley as he is upon the high place if God is not with him. If the Lord forsakes him, he will fall in either place! If the Lord is with him, he will stand in every position! I have thus hinted at some of the dangers to which humility is exposed.

III. And now, thirdly, **SOME OF THE ARGUMENTS BY WHICH WE OUGHT TO BE PROVOKED TO HUMILITY OF SPIRIT.**

1. First, let us draw some arguments *from ourselves*. What am I, that I should be proud? I am a man, that is to say, a worm; a thing that is and is not. An angel—how much he surpasses me, and yet the Lord charged His angels with folly, and the heavens were not pure in His sight. How much less, then, should the son of man, a creature full of sin, lift himself up and exalt himself as though he were something? Verily, man at his best estate is altogether vanity; his life a dream, an empty show. Oh, vain man, why should *you* be proud? Think of our mortality. In a few more years we shall be worm's meat. Caesar's dust shall be eaten, eaten by the most base of creatures! Take up the skull of some departed one in your hand and say, "What had this man to be proud of?" Go to some morgue and mark the corruption; look on some body which has been buried but a little while—what a heap of loathsomeness! And yet you and I carry about with us the elements of all that putridity—the food of all that rottenness! How, then, dare *we* be proud? I have at

home a picture which is so admirably managed that when you look closely at it, you see two little children in the bloom of youth at play, enjoying each other's company. If you go some distance from the picture, the outlines get more and more indistinct and standing some few yards away from it, it turns into death's head, with vacant, empty eyes, and the bones of the skull and the jaws—a perfect death's head. Now, this is just we! When we are looking with our poor short-sight of time, we look like fair beings that are full of life; but stand at a Scriptural distance, and view these things, and you soon perceive that we are nothing, after all, but death's heads! What right, then, have we to be proud? Begin not to be proud, man, till your life is secure—and you know that will never be! You bubble, boast not of the many colors you have—you shall directly burst. You glorious rainbow, exalt not yourself because of your varied hues—when the sun withdraws its light, or the cloud moves, you are gone! Oh, you fleecy cloud that is so soon to burst on the earth, and be dissipated forever—think not of yourself and your fleecy glories—for you shall soon depart and be gone! Every time your humility gives way, and your pride lifts up its head, remember that you are mortal, and the skeleton may teach you humility.

But there is yet a stronger argument than this. What are you but depraved creatures? When the child of God is at his best, he is no better than a sinner at his worst, except as far as God has made him to differ! “There goes John Bradford—but for the grace of God.” No, there goes Paul to curse—if *not* for the grace of God. There goes Peter to be a Judas—unless Christ shall pray for him, that his faith fail not. A sinner saved by grace and yet proud? Out on such impudence! God pardon us, and deliver us from that evil! But, then, let us remember we are not only depraved so that we are *inclined* to sin, but we *have sinned*, and how can we then be proud? We are sinners whose

best “good works” deserve the wrath of God, and the hot flames of hell—how can we venture for a single moment to stand as those who had done anything meritorious or could claim anything of our God? Verily, you and I may stand up today and say, “What is man that You should be mindful of him, or the son of man that You visit him?” The more we think of ourselves, if guided by God’s Spirit, the more reasons we shall find for “Serving God with all humility.”

2. But there are not only reasons in ourselves, there are reasons *in Christ*. Our Master was never exalted above measure. You never detect in Him one proud or scornful glance upon the meanest of the mean or the vilest of the vile. He condescended to men of low estate, but it did not look like condescension in Him. He did it in such a way that there was not the appearance of stooping. He was always on their level in His heart. He ate and drank and sat with publicans and sinners, and all in such an easy, happy spirit, that no man said of Him, “Look how He stoops.” Everyone felt that stooping was His natural attitude; that He could not stand up and be proud; it would be unbecoming in Him. “And shall the servant be above his Master, or the disciple above his Lord?” You who are purse-proud, or talent-proud, or beauty-proud, I beseech you, think how unlike you are to the Master. There was nothing in Him that would keep man back *from* Him, but everything that would draw them *to* Him. “He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Himself the form of a servant, and being in fashion as a man, He became obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross.” Look at that strange sight, and never be proud again! There is the God of heaven, and with the basin in His hands and the towel on His arms—He is washing His disciple’s feet; and here are you and I, instead of washing other men’s feet, we want *them* to anoint *our* heads, and pour on the balmy cordial of a flattering unction, that we may say of ourselves, “I am rich

and increased in goods,” whereas by that very desire, we prove ourselves to be naked, and poor, and miserable! By the love of Christ, then, let us seek to be humble.

3. There is yet one other source for arguments, though, of course, there are so many that I could not mention them all, and that is, God’s goodness towards us, which should make us exceedingly humble. You remember that text which says, “Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, hearts of compassion and humbleness of mind”? Now, I have known some who, believing that they were the elect of God, have put on haughtiness of looks! You know the school I allude to; certain gentlemen who are the elect, and nobody can ever come near to them; all other Christian people, if saved, which is a great question with them, will at least be saved so as by fire. Verily they appear to read the text thus—“Put on, as the elect of God, pride and self-conceit.” Like another text which says, “See that you love one another with a pure heart *ferently*,” which I think some people read the wrong way, upwards, and they make it out, “See that you *hate* one another with a pure heart *ferently*.” And oh, how *ferently* they have done it! How *ferently* they have hated one another! Now the mercy of God in having elected us—the mercy of God in having bought us with the precious blood of Jesus Christ—should tend to keep us very low in the dust of self-abasement—

“What was there in you that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?”

What was there in you that Christ should buy you with His precious blood? What in you that you should be made the temple of the Holy Spirit? What is there in you that you should be brought to heaven; that you should be made to sit down with Abraham and Isaac, and Jacob at the right hand of God?

What if you have been grafted into the good olive tree? Remember, you were once branches of the wild olive, and you are now nothing but grafts. What if your branch hangs down with the weight of its produce? There was a time when it brought forth nothing but the apples of Sodom, and the grapes of Gomorrah! Bless God and thank Him that the root bears you, but you bear not the root. What have you that you have not received? Who made you to differ? Your very gifts are given you by electing love; God gave them not because you deserved them, but because He chose to do so. He has made you a vessel unto honor, chastened you and made you in a fair and goodly mold; made you a fair vase, showing forth the skill of the Master. But who made you; who made you? Look back to that clay pit; look back to the potter's house, to the fashioning fingers, and the revolving wheel, and surely you will say, "My God, unto You be the praise for what I am; but of myself, I am less than nothing; I am worthless and useless; unto You be all the glory."

IV. I shall now come to my last point, upon which, with excessive brevity, I would speak to myself. Indeed, I have been all the morning speaking to myself as much as to you.

I have now a story suggested to me. There was an excellent lady who accosted me one day, and told me that she had always prayed that I might be kept humble. Of course, I was excessively grateful to her, although it was a very usual thing, so I said to her, "But do you not need to pray the same prayer for yourself?" "Oh, no," she said, "there is no need; I do not think there is any tendency in me to be proud." Well, I assured the good lady that I thought it was necessary for her to always pray, for as sure as ever she thought she had no tendency to be proud, that proved at once that she *was* proud already! We are never, never so much in danger of being proud as when we think we are humble!

Well, now, let us turn to practical account what I have said. You and I have a great work before us. I speak now especially to my church and congregation. We are about to enter into a large edifice, having large designs in our hearts, and hoping that God will give us large success. Let us have humble motives in all this. I hope we have not built that house that we may say with Nebuchadnezzar, “Behold this great Babylon which I have built.” We must not go to our pulpit, and to our pews with this soft note ringing in our ears, “Here will I make unto myself my nest, and gain a great name.” Or, “Here will be members of the largest Baptist church to receive a part of the honor which is bestowed upon the success of the ministry.” No, let us go into that house wondering at what God has done for us; marveling that God should give such grace to such a church, and that it should have such innumerable conversions in its midst. Then, when we have settled upon our work, when we see that God is blessing us, let us still keep very low before Him. If we want to lose God’s presence, it can soon be done—pride can shut the door in the face of Christ. Only let us take out our tablets and write down, “God is for me, therefore let me be proud”—only let us say with Jehu—“Come, and I will show you my zeal for the Lord of Hosts,” and God’s presence will soon depart from us and Ichabod will be written on the front of the habitation. And let me say to those of you who have already done much for Christ as evangelists, ministers, teachers, or what not—do not sit down and congratulate yourselves! Let us go home and think of all the mistakes we have made, all the errors we have committed, and all the follies into which we have been betrayed, and I think instead of self-congratulations, we shall say, “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes sees You, therefore do I abhor myself in dust and ashes.” Let us humble ourselves before God! You know there is a deal of difference between being *humble* and being

humbled; he who will not be humble, shall be humbled! Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, and He shall lift you up, lest He leave you because you hold your head so high. And should I be addressing any here this morning who are very much exalted by the nobility of rank, who have what the poet calls—

“The pride of heraldry,
The pomp of power,”

be humble, I pray you! If any man would have friends, let him be humble. Humility never did any man any hurt. If you stoop down when you pass through a doorway, if it should be a high one, you will not be hurt by stooping; you might have knocked your head if you had held it up. He who is willing to be nothing, will soon find someone who will make him something; but if he will be something, he shall be nothing, and all men will try to make him less than nothing! Go then, I pray you, as Christian men and women, and speak with the poor and needy. Be kind and affectionate towards all men. Let your Christian life suggest Christian courtesy and Christian charity.

As for you who have never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, it is useless to recommend you to humility, for how can you get the flower till you have the root? Begin, I pray you, with the root! This is the root of every Christian grace—*faith in Christ!* Come to Jesus today, just as you are. Trust Him with your poor, guilty soul. Believe Him to be both willing and able to save you. Repose your confidence in Him alone. You will then be saved, and being saved with such a salvation, you will bring forth humility as one of the sweet fruits of the Spirit of God, and your end shall be everlasting life, by the grace of God!

366 THE SILVER TRUMPET – ISA. 1:18

A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Morning, March 24th, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At Exeter Hall, Strand

“Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord:
though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” —
Isaiah 1:18

THE CHIEFS OF SINNERS are objects of the choicest mercy. Christ is a great Savior to meet the great transgressions of great rebels. The vast machinery of redemption was never undertaken for a mean or little purpose. There must be a great end in so great a plan, carried out at so great an expense, guaranteed with such great promises, and intended to bring such great glory to God! The plan of salvation has in it all the *wisdom* of God; the purchase of salvation has in it the fullness of the *grace* of God; the application of salvation is an exhibition of the exceeding greatness of the *power* of God; and all these three attributes in their greatness could not have conspired together for any but a great and marvelous purpose! At the very outset of our discourse this morning, I think we might draw a safe conclusion that Christ contemplated saving great sinners with a great salvation. To make the whole affair great there must be a great sinner—to be, as it were, the raw material upon whom the great wisdom, the great grace, and the great power may be exerted to make him into a great saint! I think both

saints and sinners have a very confined and limited idea of the goodness of God. We measure Him by our own standing. Oh that we knew the meaning of that text, where God says, “I will not execute the fierceness of My anger; I will not return to destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not man” (Hosea 11:9.) He acts in everything, not as a king gives to a king, or as some right royal heart acts towards the needy, but as a God! There is none who can come near to Him; as He is surpassing in His glory so that mortal eyes cannot behold it, so He is excelling in His love and grace, so that mortal comprehension can never grasp, comprehend, or fathom the infinity of His mercy! Keeping mercy with thousands, showing pity to multitudes—who is a God like He, passing by transgression, iniquity and sin?

My text shall at once introduce itself. It is a great text, indeed—specially meant for sinners of the deepest dye. I pray that the energy and power of the Spirit may now open the door of all our hearts that God’s mercy may enter in. Four things we will attempt to do this morning. First, we will remark that the text is addressed to *sinners of the deepest dye*. Secondly, it contains in it *an invitation to reason of the most prevailing power*. Thirdly, *it promises pardons of the fullest force*. And, fourthly, *it presents to us a time of the most solemn significance*.

I. First, then, our text is addressed to **SINNERS OF THE DEEPEST DYE**. Some of my brothers are greatly scandalized by the general invitations which I am in the habit of giving to sinners, as sinners. Some of them go the length of asserting that there are no universal invitations in the Word of God. Their assertion, however, is not so forcible an argument as a *fact*, and we have one here. Here is most plainly an invitation addressed to sinners who had not even the qualification of sensibility! They did not feel their need of a Savior; they had been scourged and flogged till the whole body was a mass of sores, and yet they would not turn to the hand that smote them, but went on

sinning! A more accurate description of careless, worthless, ungodly, abandoned souls never was given anywhere! We have in the context, one of the most graphic descriptions of human nature in its utterly lost and godless estate. There is not a single gleam of light in the midst of the thick darkness. The man is bad—bad—bad from the beginning to the end! No, he is all worst, and the worst is come to its worst. There is not a ray of promise in their nature, not a glimmer of anything good in the description of the persons to whom this text is addressed.

I call your attention, again, to the chapter which I have read. In the first verse you will perceive that the text was addressed to *senseless* sinners—so senseless that God Himself would not address them in expostulation, but called upon the heavens and the earth to hear His complaint. He spoke to the firmament, to the stars, to the sun and to the moon, and He bade them hear. Men had grown so deaf to God’s admonitions, so utterly dead to His appeals, that He refuses to address them any more in notes of warning. “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth!” What a fine poetical setting forth of the thought—that God appealed to dead, inanimate creatures, for man had become more brutish than the stones of the field; and yet to such is the invitation given, “Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord.”

You will readily see in the next place, that the text is given to *ungrateful* sinners. “I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me.” Oh, how many of us come under this description! God was good to us in our early childhood; we were dandled on the knees of piety; we were laid to sleep on the couch of holiness. God provided for our needs; we were not born slaves, or in a tottering shed, but the dawn of our days was the rising of His merciful care. But how we have sinned in childhood, and since we have come to manhood, how have we violated all the admonitions of His love, done

despite even to the blood of Christ, and to the Spirit of God! We have forgotten His mercies; we have kicked against the pricks; we have made the blessings of His providence the assistants to our sin, and the gifts of His grace the excuses for our iniquities! Oh, we may, many of us, stand here coldly and plead that we have been ungrateful to a good, a patient, and a bountiful God! And yet to such is the text addressed, “Come now, and let us reason together.”

By reading in the third verse, you will perceive, again, that the text is addressed to men who are *worse than beasts*. We often slander the brute creation. We speak of a man being as drunk as a beast. I do not know that beasts are ever drunk! Sometimes, when a man has gone into very low vice, we say he has committed a very beastly sin. I question whether the word is at all accurate! How do beasts sin? Do they not bow their necks, and wear the yoke of man, who is as a God to them? Do they quarrel with the law in which God has said, “I have given you dominion over the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea”? If we were half as obedient to God as the beasts are to man, there would be very little sin in us. But men must feel in their consciences that they have been worse than the brutes; they have not served God as an ox has served the master; they have not recognized Him even so much as the stupid ass has recognized its crib! None of us would keep a horse for 20 years if it never worked, but only sought to injure us; and yet there are men here whom God has kept these 40 and 50 years, put the breath into their nostrils, the bread into their mouths, and the clothes upon their backs, and they have done nothing but curse Him, speak ill of His service, and do despite to His laws! He is, indeed, a longsuffering God when He speaks to such as these, and says, “Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord.” One may be astonished that there is such a text as this in the Bible, but the astonishment is far

greater when you see to whom it is addressed—to *men* who are beneath the level of the brute creation! Oh, my dear friends, you who fear God, never think there are any men too bad to be saved! Go to the reprobates, to the harlots, to the drunks, to the abandoned; if God invites men who are worse than the ox and the ass, you may go and invite them, too, in the hope that the invitation shall be accepted, and they may be saved! How many there are who have gone from the dunghills of sin up to the throne of God, and how few, on the other hand, have ever come out of the Pharisee's chair to mount up to the starry skies!

Look again at the chapter before us, and the description of those to whom this text is addressed will become yet more full and clear. It appears from the 14th verse, that they were a people *laden with iniquity*. When a man is loaded and pressed down, he can make no headway whatever; these people were loaded with such a weight of iniquity that they could not stir. Their sin had become a part of their *nature*. Like ingrained colors, the sin could not be got out; if they sought to go to Christ, their sin was like a chain on their feet; if they had some thoughts of goodness, the old habits of vice soon slew those infants in the very birth! They were laden with iniquity. They could say, "How can I be better? How can I be different? Sin has become a hamper and clog to me, and I cannot move. I cannot escape from it." Yet even God says, "Come now, let us reason together." It is a dreadful thing when sin becomes not only nature, but a second nature—when the use of sin breeds the habit of sin and the man gets entangled in the meshes of an iron net from which he has no power to escape. Yet, to him, even to him, bond-slave of many lusts—chained hand and foot, and straightly shut up against the power of God—even to him is the Word of the gospel sent! "Let us reason together, says the Lord." Furthermore, they were a people not only loaded with sin, but they were teachers in transgressions, "Children

who are corrupters.” As old Charnock says, “They corrupted one another by their society and example, as rotten apples putrefy the sound ones that lie near them.” Why, I know some men who, wherever they go, carry plagues and death about them. I have noticed that in almost every village, and in every knot of society in a large town or city, there is some one man who seems to be the incarnate devil of the parish—he is the man who teaches the young to drink, to swear, to commit licentiousness. He is a man whom Satan seems to have sought out to take care of his black flock in that particular district—who is a kind of shepherd with a crook in his hand to lead the young into dangerous pastures, and make them lie down beside the poisonous streams. Yet, even to such a one, and there may be such a one here—a wicked old wretch who has taken his degrees in Satan’s college, has become a Master of Belial, a prince, and chief of sinners, a Goliath amongst the Philistines—yet, to such a man is this word sent today! Your hands are bloody with the souls of the young; you have kept a hell-house; you have grit up public entertainments which have debauched and depraved the young; today you have gold in your pocket which you have earned by the blood of souls; you have the fool’s penny, and the drunkard’s shillings which have really come into your hands from the hearts of poor women! You have heard the cries of the starving children, and you have tempted their husbands to take the drink, and ruined their bodies and their souls; you have kept a place where the entertainment was so low, so groveling, that you awoke the slumbering passions of evil in the minds of either young or old, and so you shall sink to hell with the blood of others on your head as well as your own damnation—not with one millstone about your neck but with many! “Carried away,” as John Bunyan put it, “not by one devil, but by seven devils that shall drag you down amidst the curses of the multitude whom you

have deceived.” Ah, and you, sir, infidel lecturer, who stand up and defy the Deity, knowing in your own soul that you tremble at Him, and are awfully afraid—even to you, the worst of the worst, the vilest of the vile, twice dead, plucked up by the roots, rotten, putrid, corrupt— even to you does God speak today, “Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord; though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

Can I go any further than this? I think not; still, we must read the chapter through. The blessed text we have on hand is addressed to men upon whom all manner of gifts had been lost and thrown away. It is a great aggravation of our sin when we sin under the rod; if a child disobeys its parent the moment it has been punished, it is disobedience, indeed; but oh, how some here have been chastised, and how little have they been profited by it! Will you, sir, allow me to remind you of the cholera, and how you escaped from the jaws of death? Do you remember that fever, and how you were laid very low, and you said then, “Please God, in Your mercy raise me up, and I will be a different man”? And you *were* a different man, for you were worse than you were before, and far more hardened! Oh, there are some of you who have, perhaps, escaped from shipwreck or from fire, plucked from between the very teeth of the dragon! Some of you have met with accidents of the most serious kind, one upon another—you have a bone that is scarcely set even yet—an old fracture which should jolt your memory and remind you of the goodness and mercy of God—but all this has been lost! Ah, sir, take heed, take heed! God’s justice is like the axe of the Romans; it is bound up in a bundle of rods, and when the rods are worn out, then is the axe to be used! Take care—if the rod does not bring you to repentance, the axe shall bring you to damnation! If you will leap over hedge and ditch to be damned, you will come to the end of this awful steeple-

chase— sooner than you think—and you will find it a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God! But to you, even to you, though years of sorrow have been lost upon you—to you this day is the message of the gospel sent—“Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord, though your sins are like scarlet they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Furthermore, I think that in giving this description, I shall be better preaching the gospel than during the other parts of the sermon. Let me assure you that the invitation of the text is sent to men who appeared to have been *totally depraved from the sole of the foot even to the head!* There was no soundness in them—there could not be found a single spot where there was not either a bleeding gash, or a blue bruise, or a swelling ulcer deep beneath the skin; they were all “wounds and bruises and putrefying sores.” Are you such in your own esteem today? Are you a sinner so vile that you wonder how you dared to come where God’s people meet? Do you feel as if your wounds are so corrupt and noisome, that you marvel how a godly man can stand by your side, or how your pious mother can mention your name in prayer, as she still does? Have you gone so far in sin that you cannot go any further? Have you become as damnable as a man can be in this mortal life? Yet to you—vilest, most lost, most depraved—is the word of this salvation today sent, “Come now, let us reason together.” To crown all, this message was once sent to the very worst of men, for it was sent to some whom God calls, “Sodom and Gomorrah.” How awful were the crimes of Sodom—we would not mention it—how dreadful was the lust of Gomorrah! The ear of modesty could not hear, even if the shameless tongue could dare to speak—“Their sin went up to heaven.” It was corrupt upon the earth; it was a stench to heaven itself! And yet to such is the invitation of the gospel this day sent—“Hear, oh you rulers of Sodom, and you inhabitants of Gomorrah! Come

now, and let us reason together.” They were men whose very religion was hateful to God; men whose psalms and songs and burnt offerings were as sins before the Most High; they had made their holy things unholy, and their good things vile. Their gold was dross, and their wine mixed with water; their very holiness was unacceptable to God! Yes and how many there are of this sort to be found in our streets who, when they sing a hymn in chapel or church, may well wonder how God bears with their impudence in daring to sing! Who, when they stand up to pray, might fear that they should drop down dead for their hypocrisy, for they never pray at home!

You have multitudes who would go, now and then, to church, who would keep up superstitious ceremonies, and are afraid lest their children should die without being sprinkled, and yet not afraid of dying and being lost themselves! Superstitions they will attend to, but the real religion of God, they are careless of. Next Good Friday, what a many will go to church who never go on the Sabbath! Good Friday is an ordinance of *man*, and man will attend to that; but the divine Sabbath they will neglect. There are many too, among the Papists, who would not eat meat on a Friday, but they would steal the meat on a Thursday—there are persons who would not venture for a moment to go against the rules of their particular prayer book, but they will violate the laws of God, and think nothing of doing everything which God commands them *not* to do, and leaving undone everything which He commands them to do! Yet to such, to such men whose religion is a lie, whose profession is a pretense, whose very seeking after holiness is but a subterfuge to hunt after gain—even to such is the gospel sent—“*Come now, and let us reason together.*”

I have a big net this morning—O that we might all be caught in its meshes! There is not one of us today who can be

exempt from this invitation; not even that poor soul yonder who shivers in his shoes because he fears that he has committed the unpardonable sin —

“None are excluded hence,
but those Who do themselves exclude!
Welcome the learned and polite,
The ignorant and rude!”

“Repent and be baptized every one of you,” said Peter. As John Bunyan put it, one man might have stood in the crowd, and said, “But I helped to hound Him to the cross!” “Repent and be baptized every one of you.” “But I drove the nails into His hands!” says one. “Every one of you,” says Peter. “But I pierced His side!” says another. “Every one of you,” says Peter. “But I put my tongue into my cheek, and stared at His nakedness, and said, ‘If He is the Son of God, let Him come down from the cross!’” “Every one of you,” says Peter. “Repent and be baptized every one of you.” I do feel so grieved at many of our Calvinistic brothers and sisters—they know nothing about Calvinism, I am sorry to say—for never was any man more caricatured by his professed followers than John Calvin. Many of them are afraid to preach from Peter’s text, “Repent and be baptized every one of you.” When I do it, they say, “He is unsound.” Well, if I am unsound on this point, I have all the Puritans with me—the whole of them almost without a single exception! John Bunyan first and foremost preaches to Jerusalem sinners, and Charnock, you know, has written a book, *“The Chief of Sinners, Objects of the Choicest Mercy.”* But I do not care for that. I know the Lord has blessed my appeals to all sorts of sinners, and none shall stop me in giving free invitations as long as I find them in this Book! And I do cry with Peter, this morning, to this vast assembly, “Repent and

be baptized every one of you, in the name of the Lord Jesus, for the promise is unto you and to your children, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call.”

I have thus directed the letter, and tried to find out the persons to whom the invitation is sent.

II. Secondly, the text presents us with **REASONING OF THE MOST PREVALENT POWER**. O that God would reason with you this morning; and that you who are unconverted would be willing to reason with Him! My poor lips cannot reason with you as God can; I can but humbly and feebly be the representative of the Lord Jesus for a moment to poor trembling souls. “Come now, and let us reason together.” You say, “I am too great a sinner to be saved.” I reply to you this—*What passage in God’s Word forbids you to seek for mercy?* Here is the Book; turn it over from beginning to end, and see if you can find any passage in it which says, “Such-and-such a man may not knock at the mercy gate, and may not seek a Savior.” You know there are many verses which say in spirit, “Whoever will, let him come.” Why, this is a *wooing* Book! It is always inviting you! It cries to you; no, it does more! I hope that by God’s grace it will compel you to come. I cannot find any passage that is a door to shut you out, but hundreds that invite you to come! Still you say, “I know I am too vile to be saved.” *Has the Lord ever refused you?* Have you been to Him, and sought His grace through Christ, and has He said to you, “Get you gone, you are too vile”? Why, then, will you limit the Holy One of Israel before you have tried Him? Or have you prayed? Have you? He has not promised to answer you consciously the first time? God always hears a sinner’s prayer, but He does not always let the sinner know that He has heard it! Mercy comes quickly, but a sense of mercy may be some time delayed. Oh, soul, I do assure you there was never yet a sinner who sought God, and God refused him, if he sought *through Christ*. I would ask you

yet again—Are there any, you think, *of the damned in hell who went there because Christ's blood could not save them?* Ask them! Why sirs, if any of them could say in hell, “It was God’s fault that I came here,” it would take the sting out of their torment! There is not a soul in hell who ever repented of sin; there is not a soul there who ever sought mercy through Christ, and if you could perish seeking a Savior, you would be the first—but that can never be! Well, soul, since there is no text which denies you—*COME!* Since the Lord has never yet refused you—*COME!* Since none have been lost for lack of power in Him to save—*COME!* *COME*, I pray you!

But if these reasons do not suffice you because you will put yourself out of the pale of hope, and say, “I am not worthy, I am not worthy,” let me suggest a few thoughts to you. Why was it that our Lord and Master, when He came into the world, chose to be born of sinful women? It is remarkable, that those women, whose names are mentioned as the ancestors of Christ, are perhaps, with one exception, of the vilest character! There is Tamar, who commits incest with her father-in-law; there is Rahab the harlot; there is Bathsheba the adulteress; and yet Christ sprung out of their loins! Why this black stream to mingle in with the current from which Christ should come? Why, soul, surely it was to show you that He was a Savior for *SINNERS!* Surely if He had not meant to lay hold on the vilest of the vile, this never would have occurred. But look again—what did Jesus do when He was here on earth? Where was He taken to when a child? Why, to Egypt, where they worshipped leeks and garlic, and onions, and such like trash, that it might be said, “Out of Egypt have I called My son.” Where did He begin to preach? Why, by the coast where the people that sat in darkness saw a great light! What was His general society? He was once in the house of a Pharisee, but how often was He the friend of publicans and sinners? And of those who followed

Him, what a strange sort they were. Pick out anyone you please, and there is little to be said about his previous character. These are the fishermen from the lake of Galilee, rough and uncouth; there is Peter who denies Him; there is Magdalene, out of whom was cast seven devils; there is that other woman who had been a sinner. Who was the man whom He converted after He had gone to heaven? There is only one case in the Bible where a man was converted *personally* by Christ *after* He had ascended—and that is the bloody *Saul of Tarsus* who was exceedingly mad against God's people, and was going to Damascus, that he might hunt after the disciples! The chief of sinners hears the cry—"Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" What did Jesus do when He was dying? Did He not save a *thief*—a vile thief—one of the scum and parings of the world—and did He not say, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise?" Ah, souls, my Master always went where He was most needed—among the chief of sinners! And you know His preaching. It was a preaching that was meant for the worst of men! Look at that parable of the feast, "Go you into the highways and hedges." Go and catch the hedge birds—the men who are looking after the linen drying on the hedges! Go after those who have not where to lay their heads—those who are filthy, ragged, and something worse—go and tell *them* to come in! Not the princes' sons, nor the great, nor the good—but bring here the blind, the halt, and the lame, and whomever you shall meet, and bid them to the wedding. Why? He came to give light to the dark, to give bliss to the miserable, to give life to the dead, to give salvation to the lost! Now what have you to say to this? I think such reasoning should bring you to this conclusion—

"I'll to the gracious king approach,
Whose scepter mercy gives—

Perhaps He may command my touch,
And then the suppliant lives!
I can but perish if I go,
I am resolved to try!
For if I stay away, I know
I must forever die.
But if I die with mercy sought,
When I the king have tried,
'That were to die, delightful thought,
As sinner never died!"

But I have not finished my reasoning yet—for there may still be some desponding soul who says—“Yes, God may do great wonders, but I should be the greatest wonder of all.” Look here, sinner! One of God’s ends in salvation is to honor Himself—“that it may be unto the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign, which shall not be cut off.” How does a physician get a great name? Not by curing pin scratches; or by setting to rights, little cuts upon men’s fingers. Any old woman can do that! It is by bad diseases, by things that are reckoned to be incurable, and then, as soon as the man has cured what was given up by others, he is sure to advertise in the newspapers his splendid success. “So-and-So was turned out of all the hospitals, and had taken all manner of medicine—at last I healed him.” Why, my dear friend, if you are such-a-one *spiritually*, you are the most fitted to be the means, in God’s hand, of honoring His grace. See what great engineers will do! When a man makes a railway across a good, hard, gravelly soil where all is perfect, you say, “Why any person can do that.” But when Stephenson constructed the railway across Chatmoss—a moss which sucked in any quantity of materials that was put there, and all was lost, yet, when the railway was at last formed across that bog, everybody said—“What a marvel!” Then look at the great

wonders of Mr. Brunei. He always liked to undertake impossibilities and carry them out. Things which staggered everyone's conception, he would attempt and perform. We might find fault, perhaps, with the expense, but in this case we have a God whose bank has no bottom, who has an unlimited treasury, and He loves to take hold on those black impossibilities, and go to work with them and show both to men and angels what wonders He can do! Ah, poor sinner, if you are the vilest of the vile, I think you would show forth God's grace the better. I cannot help quoting John Bunyan again. In his, *"Jerusalem sinner Saved,"* he says—"There are some of us who are God's people whose love is getting very low, and whose zeal is flagging, and we are not the men we should be. Oh, but," he adds, "if the Lord would but convert some of these jailbirds; if he would but call by His grace some of those whoremongers and adulterers, and thieves, and drunkards, what spirit they would put into the Christian church; what new life would be poured into us, for they are always the most earnest men when converted! And so," he says, "I pray that some of these big sinners may get saved, that the Church may have a new increase of zeal and love from men who love much, because much has been forgiven."

If I cannot persuade, if I cannot reason with you, for my lips are poor, poor, things as substitute for God's own voice—yet let me quote His own words, and those words are a solemn oath. Now when a *man* takes an oath, you do not think of doubting him, I hope. Now God puts His hand upon His own self-existence, and He says, "As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him who dies, but had rather that he should turn unto Me and live." He does not wish your damnation; it is not His pleasure that you should be lost; He gets glory, it is true, to His justice, but He gets no satisfaction to His love if you perish! As a father would sooner kiss his child

than use the rod, so would the Lord sooner see you at His feet in prayer than under His feet in destruction! He is a loving God; He is not hard to be dealt with. Since Christ became the substitute for men, God has showed to us that He has a heart of compassion. Come back, prodigal, come back! My Father sends me to you; come back, I pray you; He will not reject you! Oh, Spirit of the living God, melt the heart that will not move; for surely the love of God, and the riches of His grace might melt the adamant, and make the solid granite move! “Turn you, turn you; why will you die, O house of Israel? Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto God, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God for He will abundantly pardon.” I leave, then, the reasoning—only adding this, as an old divine once said, and his saying was the means of the conversion of one at least—“He who believes, has set to his seal that God is true; he who believes not, makes God a liar.” Says he, “Sinner, which will you do today; will you believe and so set to your seal that He is true, or will you disbelieve, and go on doubting, and so making God a liar?” Oh, do not this evil thing, but believe in Jesus, and you shall be saved!

III. I must now briefly turn to my third point. The words of this blessed text contain a **PROMISE OF PARDON OF THE FULLEST FORCE.**

“Though your sins are like *scarlet*, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like *crimson*, they shall be as wool.” Now these colors are selected because of their exceeding brilliance. Scarlet and crimson are colors which at once attract the eyes. There are some colors which a man might wear and pass unmolested, but when a man is clothed in bright colors, he can be perceived at a far greater distance. Now, some sins are striking, glaring sins; you cannot help seeing them; and the sinner himself is compelled to confess them. But the Hebrew

word, most of you know, conveys the idea of doubly dyed—what we call *ingrained colors*—when the wool has lain so long in the dye that it cannot be washed out, though you wash or wear it as long as you please—you must destroy the fabric before you can destroy the color. Many sins are of this class. Our own natural depravity, in fact, is just like this—it is ingrained. As well might the Ethiopian wash himself white, or the leopard take away his spots—sinners who have learned to do evil, learn to do it well! Yet here is the promise of full pardon for glaring and for ingrained lusts! And note how the pardon is put—“they shall be as snow”—pure white, virgin, snow! But snow soon loses its whiteness, and therefore it is compared to the whiteness of the wool washed and prepared by the busy housewife for her fair white linen. You shall be so cleansed that not the shadow of a spot, nor the sign of a sin, shall be left upon you! When a man believes in Christ, he is in that moment, in God’s sight, as though he had never sinned in all his life! No, I will go further—he is that day in a better position than though he had never sinned, for if he had never sinned, he would have had the perfect righteousness of *man*—but by believing, he is made the righteousness *of God* in Christ! We had once a cloak that is taken away; when we believe, Christ gives us a robe; but it is an infinitely better one. We lost but a common garment, but He arrays us royally. Strangely indeed is that man clothed who believes in Jesus! Yon thief who is hanging on the cross is black as hell—he believes and he is as white as heaven’s own purity! Faith takes away all sin through the precious blood of Jesus! When a man has once gone down into that sacred laver which is filled with Jesus’ blood, there “is no spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing,” left upon him! His sin has ceased to be! His iniquity is covered; his transgressions have been carried into the wilderness, and are gone! This is the most wonderful thing about the gospel. This does not take away part of our sin, but

the whole of it; it does not remove it partially, but entirely—not for a little time, but forever! “He who believes on Him is not condemned.” And though today you should have committed every crime in the world, yet the moment you believe in Jesus, you are saved—the Spirit of God shall dwell in you to keep you from sin in the future—and the blood of Christ shall plead for you that sin shall never be laid to your charge! Some years ago there was a man who had committed murder. He had been, indeed, a most dreadful character, but through the teaching of a minister of Christ, he was converted to God. He had one anxiety, namely, that having believed in Jesus, he might be baptized before he suffered the sentence of the law. It could not be effected according to the law of the country in which he then lived, except he be baptized in chains. And so he was baptized in chains; but what did it matter? He was baptized in *joy*; he knew that He who can save to the uttermost, could save even him, and though in chains, he was free; though guilty before man, pardoned in the sight of God; though punished by human law, saved from the curse by the precious blood of Jesus. And of course, do not misunderstand me, he was *not* saved by the *baptism*—he was saved by the *blood*. There is no knowing how long God’s arm is; there is no telling how precious Christ’s blood is—until you have felt the power of it yourself! And then you will wonder as long as you live, even through eternity, and you will be astonished to think that the blood of Christ could save such a wretch as you are, and make you the monument of His mercy!

IV. I now come to notice, in the last place, the **TIME** which is mentioned in the text, which is of the **MOST SOLEMN SIGNIFICANCE**.

“Come *now*, and let us reason together, says the Lord.” “Come *now*.” You have sinned long enough; why should you harden your hearts by longer delay? Come *now*, no season can

be better! If you tardy till you're better, you will never come at all. Come *now*. You may never have another warning; the heart may never be as tender as it is today. Come *now*. No other eyes may ever weep over you; no other heart may ever agonize for your salvation. Come *NOW, NOW, NOW*—for tomorrow you may never know in this world. Death may have sealed your fate, and the once filthy may remain filthy, still. Come *now*; for tomorrow your heart may become harder than stone, and God may give you up. Come *now*; it is God's time. Tomorrow is the devil's time. "Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, when your fathers tempted Me, and proved Me in the wilderness, and saw My works." Come *now*. Why delay to be happy? Would you put off your wedding day? Will you postpone the hour when you are pardoned, and delivered? Come *now*; the heart of Jehovah yearns for you; the eyes of your Father see you afar off, and He runs to meet you. Come *now*; the church is praying for you. These are revival times—ministers are more in earnest—God's people are more anxious. Come *now*—

"Lest slighted once, the season lost
Should never return again!"

Come *now*. Mortal man, mortal woman, so near your end—thus says the Lord—"Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live; and because I will do this, consider your ways." Come *now*; oh, that I had power to send home this invitation! But it must be left in the Master's hands. Yet, if an anxious heart could do it, how would I plead with you! Sinner, is hell so pleasant that you must endure it? Is heaven a trifle that you must lose it? What? Is the wrath of God which abides on you no reason why you should labor to escape? What? Is not a perfect pardon worth the having? Is the precious blood of

Christ worthless? Is it nothing to you that the Savior should die? Man, are you a fool? Are you mad? If you must play the fool, go and sport with your gold and silver, but not with your soul! Dress yourself like a madman, wear a mask, paint your cheeks, walk in shame, and make a mockery of yourself, if you must play the fool—but why cast your soul into hell for a joke? Why lose your eternal interests for a little ease? Be wise, man! Be wise, woman! Oh, Spirit of God, make this sinner wise! We may preach, but it is Yours to apply. Lord apply it! Come forth Great Spirit! Come from the four winds, O Breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live! In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, O Spirit of God come forth! By the voice which once bade the winds cease from roaring, and the waves lie still, come Spirit of the living God! In the name of Jesus who was crucified, sinners, believe and live! I preach not now in my own name, or in my own strength, but in the name of Him who gave Himself for sinners on the cross. “Repent and be baptized every one of you.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved”—

“But if your ears refuse
The language of His grace,
And hearts grow hard like stubborn Jews,
That unbelieving race.
The Lord in vengeance dressed
Shall lift His hand and swear
‘You that despise My promised rest,
Shall have no portion there.’”

Let me dismiss you with the words of blessing. May the grace of our Lord Jesus, the love of the Father, and the fellowship of the Spirit, be with all who believe in Christ now and forever. Amen and Amen.

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**A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Morning, September 28th, 1856,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At Exeter Hall, Strand**

“Ascribe you greatness to our God.” — Deuteronomy 32:3

OUR GOD IS ONE GOD. He is none other than the infinite Jehovah who of old spoke unto His people, and revealed Himself by that marvelous incommunicable name—the name Jehovah! And yet, though He is one God, we are taught in Scripture that He is one God in three most glorious persons. While we rightly believe in the unity of the Godhead, and are so far Unitarians, we believe there are three persons in one God, and thus, we are Trinitarian Unitarians. We believe that the Father is God, and we ascribe unto Him greatness, for we believe that He made the world, and settled the pillars thereof. We believe that He fashioned the universe, and that He moves the starry orbs through space. We look up to the wondrous depths of a shoreless night, and we see the starry fleet sailing alone, and we believe that God is their captain. We look still further and, as by the aid of science we discover the void illimitable, we believe that God dwells there, and is the infinite Creator and Preserver of all things that exist and subsist. We ascribe greatness unto Him, the Creator and the Protector of the world. We equally believe that Jesus Christ, who is God incarnate in the flesh, is very God of very God. We conceive the work of our redemption to be as divine a work as that of

creation. We consider that the miracles He did partly furnish us with the abundant proofs that He must have been none other than God. We behold Him rising by His own might from the tomb. We see Him standing at the right hand of God, making intercession for us. We expect with joy His second coming. We look forward to the Day of Judgment, wherein He shall hold the great judgment of nations. And for these reasons, believing Him to be God, we ascribe greatness unto Jesus Christ, the surety of the better covenant. And as for the Holy Spirit, believing that the work of conversion is as great as even that of redemption, or creation, we believe Him to be the everlasting God. We see Him so described in Scripture, that we dare not speak of Him as an *influence*, as a new *emanation* from the Deity; but we conceive Him to be a Person as very God of very God, as is the Father, so is the Son. We solemnly subscribe to the creed of St. Athanasius, that though there are not three Gods, but one God, yet, there are three persons in the glorious Trinity in unity of the everlasting Jehovah, unto whom belong the shouts of the universe, the songs of angels, and the ascription of our united praise. Our God, then, is to be understood as Father, Son, Holy Spirit! One God whom we adore—and the words of Moses apply to the God of Christians as well as to the God of Jews—“Ascribe you greatness to our God.”

I shall use the text, first, *as a caution*; secondly, *as a command*. I shall be but brief upon each particular, for my strength I feel may speedily fail me, but I trust in God to make some impressions on our hearts.

I. First, then, I shall use it as **A CAUTION**.

Inasmuch as Moses has said, “Ascribe you greatness to our God,” we believe that he intended thereby to hint to us that we ought to ascribe greatness to none else. If greatness is to be ascribed to God, then none of God’s creatures may in the least share the honor of that mighty attribute of greatness! Now, as

there are many who violate this truth of God, and need this caution, they must allow me, if any of them are here, to caution them.

First, then, the man who trusts his salvation in the least degree to priests or pope, or any dignitary of any church, violates this great command—“Ascribe you greatness to our God.” If I bow my knee before a saint; if I worship a created being; if I seek the intercession of any save the one person who is ordained to be the Mediator between God and man, the man, Christ Jesus, I do in that degree derogate from the greatness of God! Some think not. They suppose that by using some influence with the Virgin Mary, or with the saints, these may also be induced to plead with God. No, they consider it to be honorable to employ some ambassador, seeing they conceive themselves to be unworthy to go to God with their own suit, and do not think Christ to be an all-sufficient Mediator to go for them! We reply that, however humble they may think it on their part; however they may really and honestly suppose that they are magnifying God Himself, it becomes them to know this—that they are not doing homage to His greatness in supposing that a *saint* is more merciful than *God*! In imagining that a saint shall have more influence with God than His own Son, I suppose that His heart is not tender enough to be open to my cry without the use of influence—which is to say the very least of it—throwing some slur on the infinity of His mercy, and detracting in no small degree from the kindness of His grace. God has one Mediator because man needed it! He has no more mediators because neither God nor man requires any! Christ is All-Sufficient. You do need a Mediator between yourselves and God, but you need *none* between *yourselves* and *Christ*. You may go to Christ just as you are, with all your filthiness, with all your sins, for He came to save you from what you now are, and to make you a people for Himself who should

show forth His praise. Detract not, then, from the glory of His grace by bowing down before others, and asking them to intercede for you!

I remember a singular anecdote which sets out very clearly the absurdity of the intercession of the saints. Some of you may have heard it before, but as many of you may not, I will tell it again. A good English farmer had a landlord who resided in Ireland. On a sudden, the bailiff raised his rent so tremendously that the poor farmer could by no means pay his way, and was getting entirely ruined. He, therefore, applied to the bailiff to have the rent taken down to a fair average. After applying scores of times, he got no answer, and he was very near destruction. He applied to other persons whom he supposed to have influence with his landlord; but he made no way at all, and was as ill-treated as before. So doing what he had quite a right to do, he just went over to Ireland and called to see his lordship of whom he had taken the farm. He was shown in to him, and explained that he had taken the farm at a rent which he held to be fair to him and to his landlord, and that then he had made a living, but that on a sudden the bailiff unaccountably raised the rent, so that he was nearly ruined. “My good friend,” said the landlord, “why did you not come before? I don’t wish that any man should be ruined through me. Let the rent be taken down to anything you think fair.” “But,” said the man, “I spoke to your bailiff; I did not dare to come to speak to a gentleman like you.” “Oh,” he said, “farmer, you are very welcome.” But before the farmer left, he took him to see a chapel where there were all sorts of pictures. The farmer was rather startled, and asked to know what they meant. “Why,” said the landlord, “these are the priests, and these are the saints. I put up my prayers to them, and then they intercede with Jesus Christ on my behalf.” The farmer laughed. The landlord asked him why, and he said, “I was thinking it could be a pretty bit of

business; it would be doing very much the same as I did. I went round to your bailiff, and to your friends, and I never got any redress till I came to yourself, sir. So you may go round to these very fine ladies and gentlemen you call saints, and I believe you will never get much from them, till you go to the Lord, Himself, and present your petition direct to Him. And if you do, I believe you will have a very good chance of success.” This is a singular British-like mode of illustration, but it is sufficient, I think, to put aside the idea of going to saints in order to intercede with God! The fact of worshipping saints, of trusting my salvation in the hands of men, and thinking that any persons can forgive my sins, is to my soul, abhorrent beyond abhorrence, and hideous beyond horror! We should “Ascribe greatness to our God”—to Him and Him alone!

Very possibly, however, what I have said of that matter will be agreed to by all of you, and the arrow will fly into other breasts than yours. Allow me, therefore, to make the remark that in Protestant countries there is still a very strong tendency to priest-craft. Though we do not bow down and worship images, and do not professedly put our souls into the hands of priests, yet, I am sorry to say it, there is scarcely a congregation that is free from that error of ascribing greatness to their minister! If souls are converted, how very prone we are to think there is something marvelous in the *man*! And if saints are fed and satisfied with marrow and fatness, how prone we are to suppose that the *preacher* has something about him by which these wondrous things are done! And if a revival takes place in any part of the vineyard, it matters not in what denomination; there is an aptness in the human mind to ascribe some part of the glory and the praise to the mere human agency! Oh, beloved, I am sure every right-minded minister will scorn the thought! We are but your servants for *Christ’s* sake; we speak to you, by God’s grace, what we believe to be God’s truth—but

ascribe not to *us* any honor or any glory! If by anything a soul is saved, God from first to last has done it! If your souls are fed, thank the Master! Be respectful and grateful to the servant as you can be, but most of all thank Him who puts the Word into the mouths of His servants, and who applies it to your heart. “Oh, down with priest-craft!” Even I, myself, must down with it! Down with it!” If I, like Samson, fall beneath its roof, let me fall myself and be crushed, well content in having pulled down or contributed to remove one solitary brick in that colossal house of Satan! Take care, friends that you put no honor upon any *man* that you ought to have ascribed unto your God. “Ascribe you greatness to our God.”

There is, too, in our land of freedom, somewhat of a tendency to ascribe greatness to kings and mighty men. We are, most of us, professedly democrats. We generally talk democratically when we get together. But there is not an Englishman who is much of a democrat after all. When we get by a noble lord, how we do look up to him, as if he were some angel come down from on high! How we defer to the man who bears a title, and whatever he might state, we should have scarcely the honesty to tell him the truth, because he added, “Duke,” or, “Lord,” to his name! Why, my friends, in this world we seldom judge men as to *character*; we judge them as to *rank*! The poor and honest man goes through the streets—will you crowd to see him? A man wears a crown who is a perjurer—and will you not rush out and clap your hands at him? You judge according to rank, and not according to character! Would God we all knew how to judge men not according to the sight of our eyes, or the hearing of our ears, but according to the rightness of their characters! Oh, honor the Queen; God has said so in his Word. Pay deference unto authorities as you should do; but if in anything they swerve, remember your knee must bow to God, and to God alone. If in anything there is

anything wrong, though it should have a sovereign's name attached to it, remember, only one is your Master, one is your King, "King of kings and Lord of lords." Ascribe not greatness unto emperors and monarchs—"Ascribe you greatness unto our God," and unto our God alone!

In the case of those who are in the employ of masters, it is but just and right that they should render unto their masters that which is their due. But when the master commands that which is wrong, allow me solemnly to caution you against giving to him anything which you are not bound to do. Your master tells you, you must break the Sabbath. You do it because he is your master. You have violated this command, for it is said, "Ascribe you greatness unto *God*." You are tempted in your employment to commit a fault; you are *commanded* to do it. You are irresolute; you waver for a moment—you say, "Shall I obey God or man?" At last, you say, "My master said so, I must obey him, or I shall lose my job." Remember, you have not ascribed greatness unto God when you say that! Rather say this—"In all things that are right, I am the servant of all men; but in things that are wrong, I will not yield. I will stand up steadfast for God's right and for God's commands. Men may be my masters when they tell me to do the thing that is honest, and the thing that is just, but if in anything they swerve from that, I will not break my heavenly Master's command! He is more my Master than they—I will stand firm and fast by Him." How many young men are tempted from the path they ought to pursue by those who exercise influence upon them? How many a young woman has been turned aside from uprightness by some command which has been given her by a person who had influence over her? Take care that you allow no man to get dominion over your conscience! Remember, you will have no excuse at the Day of Judgment; it will be no alleviation of your guilt to say that you were commanded by man to do wrong, for

God will reply to you—"I told you to ascribe greatness to Me, and to Me only, and inasmuch as you obeyed man rather than God, you have violated My command." "Ascribe you greatness to our God." Take that caution—believe it—and receive it in your daily life, and in your dealing with great and small.

This text has a bearing upon certain philosophic creeds which I will just hint at here. Some men, instead of ascribing greatness to God, ascribe greatness to the laws of nature, and to certain powers and forces which they believe govern the universe. They look up on high; their eyes sees the marvelous orbs walking in their mystery along the sky; they take the telescope and peer into the distance, and they see yet more marvelous orbs, some of them of fire, and others of a structure they cannot understand. And they say, "What stupendous laws are those which govern the universe!" And you will see in their writings that they ascribe everything to *law*, and nothing to God. Now, all this is wrong! Law without God is nothing! God puts force into law, and if God acts by laws in the government of the material universe, it is still the force of God which moves the worlds along, and keeps them in their places! Law without God is nullity. Reject every philosophy that does not ascribe greatness to God, for there is a worm at the root of it; there is some cancer at its heart, and it yet shall be destroyed! That and that alone shall stand which ascribes "greatness unto our God."

II. So far by way of caution; now, by way of **COMMAND**. "Ascribe you greatness to our God."

This command comes to the sinner when he first begins seriously to consider his position before God. My friend, you have never thought of heaven or of hell until this moment, except it is a casual thought which is offensive to you. You are now in God's house, and perhaps you are inclined to think of your own position. You remember that you are standing upon a narrow neck of land between two unbounded seas—

“A point of time, a moment’s space
May land you in yon heavenly place.
Or shut you up in hell.”

I hope you are asking yourself, “How can I be saved?” I beseech you in the very outset of that question take this for your guide—“Ascribe greatness to our God.” By this I mean when you look at your sins, ascribe greatness to God’s justice. Do not do as some who say, “It is true, I have rebelled against God, but then, very likely, He will not punish me.” Be not as some who suppose that God’s justice is such a thing of willow that it can easily bend to justify without satisfaction, and pardon without atonement. Remember this as undoubted truth of God, that our God is very great in justice. Solemnly I assure you from God’s holy Word that He is just, that He will by no means clear the guilty unless they are cleared by Jesus Christ. If you have sinned but one sin, God will punish you for it! If you have sinned but one hour, that one hour will damn your soul despite all your repentance and all your good works— unless the blood of Jesus Christ shall take the sins away! Remember, God cannot pass by sin without expressing His displeasure, and either on your shoulders, or else on those of Christ, the lash must fall—for fall somewhere it must! God must punish every sin; He must punish every crime; and unless you have confidence that Christ suffered for you—remember He is very great—the whole of His wrath, every drop of the shower of His anger must fall on your poor helpless head, and every word of His awful curse must sink deep into your inmost heart! He is a very great God! He is not like the little kings of earth who sometimes pass by sin without punishment; but He is severely Just, and strict towards all offenders. He says, “I *will* punish you for your sin.” “The soul that sins, it shall die.” Start with that, then, when you begin to think of being saved.

Next to this, addressing the sinner who is already convicted of this sad and solemn thought let me say, “Ascribe greatness unto our God”—that is, to His mercy. My friend, you are sensible that you are guilty; conscience has had its work with your soul; you are certain that if God is Just, He must punish you. You are well aware He cannot pass by your iniquities without exhibiting His Wrath concerning them. Maybe under a sense of guilt you will cry, “My sins are too great to be pardoned.” Stop! Stop! Put Jesus Christ’s blood upon them, and my life for yours, my soul for yours, they are not too great! Instead of ascribing greatness to your *sin*, ascribe greatness to our *God*! Remember, if in coming to God as a penitent, you think that His mercy is little, you dishonor Him; if you suppose that the blood of Christ is not capable of washing out your blackest crime, you dishonor the glorious atonement of Christ! Whenever you doubt, you defraud God of His honor, for remember He has said it, “Him that comes unto Me, I will in no wise cast out.” Come, poor sinner, and ascribe greatness to God’s mercy! Believe that His arms are wide—believe that His love is deep; believe that His grace is broad—believe that He is allpowerful to take away your vilest sin, and wash you of your crimson guilt. “Ascribe greatness to our God.” Be convinced of His great mercy, you seeking souls who want Christ, and know not where to find Him.

Further, let me appeal to the Christian. “Ascribe greatness to our God.” You are in trouble, dear fellow-laborers; you are wearied with the hardness of your journey; your poverty has got hold of you; your troubles are multiplied and increased. It is a dark night with you just now; you see not your sins; you have no sweet promise to light upon—no cheering word to reassure your poor desponding heart. Come, here is a text for you—“Ascribe you greatness to our God.” Great as your troubles are, remember He is greater! If the darkness is very

thick, remember the mountain stands as firm at night as in the day! And when clouds girdle His throne, yet they never shake its basement—

“Firm as the earth His promise stands,
And He can well secure
What you commit into His hands,
Till the decisive hour.”

Never think your trials are too huge for Him. Take them to Him; cast them on the Lord; trust Him with them all; His everlasting shoulders, that, like Atlas, bear the world, did never totter yet, nor shall they! Cast the whole roll of your troubles at His door—He will relieve you! Take the whole bundle of your sorrows; cast them at His feet—He can take them all away! And when the devil tempts you to believe that God cannot help you, tell him that you think better of Him than that; you ascribe greatness to the Almighty, and you believe He is great enough to deliver you from all your sorrows. Perhaps just now you are engaged in prayer; you have been for weeks and months agonizing at the throne; you have had but little success there. Well, as you go to the mercy seat, take this with you “Ascribe you greatness to our God.” We often get but little from God because we think Him a little God; we ask very little of God at times, and therefore we get little. He who in prayer believes God to be great, and asks of God as if He were great, shall be certain to get many mercies from Him! Little-Faith gets little answers, but Great-Faith believes God’s greatness and says—

“I am coming to a King,
Large petitions I will bring!
For His grace and power are such,
None can ever ask too much!”

Thus, in *prayer*, ascribe greatness unto God! Do you ask a hundred? Ask a thousand! Have you asked a thousand? Ask ten thousand! Oh, I beseech you never stint for faith, nor stint for desire. God has said, “Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.” Remember the king of Israel. The prophet came to him and gave him the bow and arrows. He said, “Shoot with the bow and arrows.” And he shot once or twice, and then he stayed his hand. And the prophet said, “You should have shot again and again, and then you would have smitten all the Assyrians until you had destroyed them.” Even so does God! When He gives us faith, He puts the bow and arrows into our hands. Oh, do not smite once or twice! Smite many times, and you shall smite your sins until you have destroyed them! Draw the long bow of prayer— shoot your arrow as far as ever you can; ask for nothing small—in small petitions, you suppose Him to be a small giver. Ask greatly, and He will give greatly! “Ascribe you greatness to our God.” But I hope you are today engaged in *duty*. You have the duty thrust upon you by providence which you do not flee from. Like Jonah, you are half a mind to go to Tarshish instead of going to Nineveh, for you are afraid your strength will never bear you up in so huge a labor as that which has fallen to your share. Stop! Pay not your fare to Tarshish, else winds shall pursue you. Believe this—

“Weak as you are,
Yet through His might,
All things you can perform!”

And believing, go forward; go forward and stop at nothing! If God should call me to break the Alps in sunder, let it please Him to give me faith. I believe He would give me strength to do it. If God were to call you, as He did Joshua, to stop the sun in its course, and seize his golden bridle, and bid his coursers

stay their hasty race, you would have strength enough to do it! “Ascribe you greatness to our God.” If like Luther, you had to brave the Vatican, and breast the storm, if God intended you for the work, He would give you grace to stand in it! And if your trial should be one of persecution, if you are called to the stake, you need not fear to march boldly to it, and embrace it—for He who called you to die, will give you *dying* grace, will give you *burning* grace—so that you shall endure in the midst of hideous torments, and terrific pains! “Ascribe you greatness to our God.” Yes, greatness made greater in the midst of creature *weakness*!

And now, to close, there is one point I wish to urge upon your attention tonight. Wherever I go, it is the almost universal complaint that the former times were better than now. Everywhere it is the solemn conviction of Christians that the Church is in a very wrong position; go where you please, you will hear one confession, one doleful, lamentable groan, that the Church is cold and lifeless! Not dead, but Laodicean—and I believe that Laodicea is the most correct picture of the Church at the present moment. We are neither hot nor cold, and Christ is angry with us. Where is the zeal—the zeal of Whitefield? Ah, where are the men who weep for perishing sinners? Where are the ministers who weep for souls as if they were full of life or death? Where are the Baxters, now, whose knees shake when they climb their pulpit stairs because they feel how solemn is their position, and whose cheeks are glittered with tears because they know the doom of perishing sinners, and long to snatch them from the fire? Where are your Rowland Hills, now, who descend to common language to reach the common people? Yes, and where are your praying men, and praying women? There are many of them—but where are those who pray with all their hearts as if they meant it? Ah, heaven knows, the Church is just now where it ought not to be!

But, oh, Christians, sit not down in despair! Think not that God has given us over. “Ascribe you greatness to our God.” In the very worst of times, God can bring us out again! In the times of Arius, when the world was gone aside to disbelieve the divinity of Christ, God provided an Athanasius who in bold, stern language put to flight the Arians and stood up for God! When the world had gone aside to Pelagianism, He found an Augustine who uttered the words of grace, and delivered the world from that mesh of errors. When the Church had gone into foul delusions, there was the monk found who shook the world—the Luther to proclaim the truth of God! And when the doctrines needed purity, there was the Calvin to cast salt into the troubled craters, and make them calm and limpid, so that man could see to the very bottom! And when in later times, the Church *of* England, and the church *in* England had sunken very low, all men said God had given up His church; there were found six young men in the college of Oxford. God only knows how they got there, and how they were converted. Those six—Wesley and Whitefield being of the number—awakened the world again from its dark and long slumber! And when we had relapsed again, God found the successors of Whitefield—the Romains, the Topladys, the John Newtons, the Rowland Hills—men like Christmas Evans, like John Berridge! These came to bear the standard of the Lord, and to support His truth. And mark you, now, God has got the man somewhere! Yes, the MEN somewhere, and they will yet come out. There will be a shaking one of these days; the men shall yet come to move the church once more; we shall not forever sleep; we shall not forever lie still; there will be a revival throughout this land, I do believe, such as our fathers never saw! The times shall come when the heavens shall give ear and shall hear the call, and shall send down rain, when the earth shall blossom with righteousness, and the heavens shall drop with dew. For that

time, we all heartily pray, for the time we earnestly wait. “Ascribe you greatness to our God.”

To my own church and people, only one word and then farewell. My friends, we also are about to engage in an enterprise for which I fear we are not quite competent. But remember God will provide for us. Often on my bed do I toss restlessly by night to know what is to become of all these people. Where is my church to be housed, and where my congregation to be gathered? And but last night in unbelief, I thought it never could be that such a place could be built. But ah, always “Ascribe you greatness to God.” Let us *attempt* great things, and we shall *do* great things. Let us try at them, and *God being with us*, we shall do them yet! If I had cared to preach in fine and gaudy language, I might, perhaps, have done it; but I have cared only to speak just as common people do. I often tell tales that shock propriety—I shall do it again! I often do things that others condemn me for—I shall do still worse, God helping me! If I can but win souls by them, I am not to be daunted by any opinion whatever; if heirs of heaven are snatched from hell, I shall rejoice to have done it by any means in the world! Well, then, if I am ever to have the poor around me, then will I trust in God, in His poor, and in His church, that they will yet raise a tabernacle where His name is to be honored! Lay it to your hearts, and if you think it is God’s work, go about it with faith and with vigor. “Ascribe you greatness to our God.”

Oh, you who hate my God; you who despise Him; the day is coming—perhaps tomorrow shall be the day when you shall “Ascribe greatness to my God”; for you shall feel His great foot upon your loins, and His great sword shall cut you in two; His great wrath shall utterly devour you, and His great hell shall be your doleful home forever!

May God grant it may not be so, and may He save us all for Jesus' sake. Amen.

368 THE MARCH! (*FINAL NEW PARK STREET*)

– NUM. 10:35

A Sermon

Delivered on Sunday Morning, March 31th, 1861,

by the

REV. C. H. SPURGEON

At Exeter Hall, Strand

**“And it came to pass, when the ark set out, that Moses said,
Rise up, O Lord! Let Your enemies be scattered, and let those
who hate You flee before You.”— Numbers 10:35**

THE PEOPLE OF GOD in the wilderness were led instrumentally by the wisdom of Moses and his father-in-law Hobab; but really, their guiding star was the visible presence of God in the pillar of cloud by day, and pillar of fire by night. I suppose that the possession of this pillar as a guide, did not remove from them the duty and the necessity of using the judgment of Moses and Hobab as to the place where they should encamp. You will remember that Moses expressly said to his relative, “You know how to encamp in the wilderness, and you shall be unto us instead of eyes.” They had the guidance of God, yet they were not to neglect the wisdom which God had given to His servants, and the judgment with which He had endowed them. We ought to learn from this, I think, that while we ever seek the guidance of God in providence, yet we may frequently find direction and guidance in the use of our own common sense, our own discretion with which the Lord has endowed us. As long as the pillar of cloud tarried, the people always waited. However inconvenient the

spot might be, if it rested one day, or 20 days, or a month, or a whole year, they stood still. But the moment that the cloud moved, whether the fiery column marched through the darkness of the night, or the cloudy pillar mellowed the brightness of the sun and screened them from its torrid heat, they removed at once. However excellent might be their quarters, they never dared to delay when once the presence of God moved from above them. It was His to lead—it was theirs to follow. Yet, before they began the march, before the standard of Judah was uplifted, and that tribe began to take up its tents to lead the van, the silver trumpet was always blown in the front. It was heard through the entire encampment—the silver trumpet, which seemed to say, “Arise! Depart!— This is not your rest. Your God has removed, and you must follow.” Then Moses himself came forward, and stretching out his hands, he cried, “Arise, O Lord! Let Your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate You flee before You.” When this was done, on marched the mighty host, and when they came to their halting place, again, and the trumpet sounded for the rest of eventide, up came the king in Jeshurun, the prophet of Horeb, and lifting up his hands, again he cried, “Return unto Your rest and unto the many thousands of Israel,” and the pillar rested over the top of the great encampment, and gave them a bright and flaming light by night, even as it gave them a glorious covering and protection by day.

To what use are we to put this prayer of Moses; for no passage of Scripture is of private interpretation. No single text in the Word of God relates simply to the occasion on which it is spoken; but, whatever things were written aforetime were written for our learning. The Word of God is a living Word—not a Word that had life in it in the day of Moses, and is now dead—but a Word which is as living to us at this hour, as when it first came from the prophetic lips of the great lawgiver! I

think I shall be warranted in using the text, “Rise up, O Lord! Let Your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate You flee before You” in three ways this morning. We shall use it, first, as *the watchword of God’s Israel in every age*. Secondly, we are warranted by the 68th psalm in referring this text, typically and mystically, *to the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ*. And I think, also, the guidance of God’s Spirit will warrant us, in the third place, in using this text *personally, for ourselves as individuals, and as a church*; and we would offer this prayer now that the ark of God in our midst is about to be removed, “Rise up, O Lord! Let Your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate You flee before You.”

I. First, then, THIS HAS BEEN THE WATCHWORD OF THE CHURCH OF GOD IN ALL AGES.

The people of God in the wilderness were the picture of God’s church upon earth. We are strangers and foreigners upon the earth; we are pilgrims and sojourners as all our fathers were. I was struck last evening, on reading for my own instruction the 33rd chapter of the book of Numbers, with the constant occurrence of verses concerning the removal of the people. “And they removed from Ethan, and turned again unto Pihahiroth.” “And they journeyed in the wilderness of Ethan, and pitched in Marah. And they removed from Marah and came unto Elim.” They went from the place of bitterness to the place of feasting. “And in Elim were twelve fountains of water, and threescore and ten palm trees; and they pitched there. And they removed from Elim, and encamped by the Red Sea. And they removed from the Red Sea, and encamped in the wilderness of Sin. And they took their journey out of the wilderness of Sin, and encamped in Dophkah. And they departed from Dophkah and encamped in Alush. And they removed from Alush, and encamped at Rephidim.” And so, the whole chapter is a succession of removing and encamping, till

at last they ceased to dwell in tents, and came to live in their own walled cities in the land of Canaan! Just such has been the history of the church—it has always been removing from its place, and such has been the condition of each individual. Here we have no abiding city. “We seek a city which has foundations whose builder and maker is God.” Here we have but an earthly house of our tabernacle which is soon to be dissolved, and we are continually men of the weary foot who rest not but journey onward to the place of rest.

Albeit that they had no habitation except their tents, yet it is true of Israel in the wilderness, that they always had an habitation. Do you not remember the song of Moses—“Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.” Wherever they were, God was their dwelling place! As I have said before, by day they were covered with His cloud, and they dwelt under the vast canopy like princes in a pavilion. By night they were covered with its fiery luster, and they rested under it with a light that never made glad the earth by night save only to *their* eyes. God’s wings were always over them! He carried them all the days of old, and they did really rest and dwell in Him. Today, in our Father’s house, there are many *mansions*, and it was true of them yesterday that in their Father’s house were many *tents*; in those tents they dwelt; but all of them dwelt in their Father’s house. This, too, is true of the entire church—always wandering, yet never far from home—unhoused, yet always in palaces—sometimes destitute, afflicted, tormented, and yet always clothed, always rich, always feasting to the full; deserted, yet not alone; forsaken, yet multiplied; left, yet still abiding with Him who fills all in all!

We might carry the parallel out still further, but it is enough for us to remark this morning that in another point, the people of God in the wilderness were the picture of the church of Christ. Wherever they marched, when God went before them,

they marched to victory! Lo, the Red Sea rolls in their way; the pillar of cloud moves; they follow; the frightened sea divides, and the Red Sea, itself, is astonished! What ails you, O sea that you were driven back, and your waters stood upright as a heap? It was before the Lord, before the presence of the mighty God of Jacob! They march onward; the Amalekites attack them—they fall upon the Israelites all of a sudden when they are unaware—but God fights for them, Moses' hands are upheld until the going down of the sun, and Joshua smites the Amalekites and Jehovah Nissi is all glorious! Then Sihon, king of the Amorites, came out against them, and Og, king of Bashan, and the Moabites attack them, but the Lord is in the front of them, and they suffer no harm. Their enemies melt before them as the fat of rams; into smoke they are consumed, yes into smoke they disappear. Even so has it been with the Church of God in all ages! Her march has been that of one who is fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners. Let but her silvery trumpet sound, and the echo shakes the vaults of hell; let but her warriors unsheathe their swords, and their enemies fly before them like thin clouds before a Biscay gale! Her path is the pathway of a conqueror—her march has been a procession of triumph. Wherever she has put her foot, the Lord has given her that land to be her heritage forever and ever, and as it was in the beginning, it is now and ever shall be till this world shall end. Amen.

Now, having just touched upon the parallel let me show how this war cry has really been heard of God, and has been fulfilled to all His people. Turn to this book, this book of the wars of the Lord. Wherever His church has gone, and He has risen up, have not His enemies been scattered? Though they were the hundred kings of Canaan, were they not hanged upon trees, or speedily put to death with the edge of the sword? Though it was Agag, king of the Amalekites, was he not hewn

in pieces? Though it should be the mighty princes of the Philistines—did not their champions lose their heads, and their princes fly apace? Though it should be the embattled ranks of Syria—did not God smite them in the valleys, and chase them on the hills? Though it were Sennacherib—did not God rise up, and did not His enemies at once die before His presence? Did they not fall like the leaves of the forest “when autumn has blown”? Though it were the hosts of Egypt in later times, or the mighty ranks of Babylon, or Media, or Persia— can we not say concerning them all—“Your right hand, O Lord, Your right hand, O Lord, has dashed in pieces the enemy. Your right hand, O Lord, has done wonderful things, this is known of all the earth”? But, when we have read the Bible story through, the book of God’s triumph has only begun! Look to the later battles of the church. You remember the story of Oliver Cromwell and his men at the battle of Dunbar—when before the battle they all of them knelt on the heather, and asked the Lord their God to be with them, and then springing up they chanted this old psalm—

“Let God arise, and scattered
let all His enemies be,
And let all those who hate Him,
before His presence flee.
As the smoke is driven, so drive
You them. As fire melts wax away,
Before God’s face let wicked men,
so perish and decay.”

And then, home went their swords, and their enemies fled down the hill, and a speedy victory was given. I quote not this except as a picture and illustration of the history of the entire Church. I think, in a spiritual sense, when Luther first bowed

his knee, the church began to chant, “Rise up, O Lord! Let Your enemies be scattered.” When Knox in Scotland upheld the glory of Jesus’ name, was it not, once again, “O God arise! Let those who hate You, flee before You”? When Whitefield and Wesley, seraphic Evangelists of Jesus Christ, went through this land, was not this the very song of Israel, “Rise up, O Lord! Let Your enemies be scattered”? And shall it not be ours today? Let God but go forth with our arms; let Him but speak through our ministers; let Him but dwell in our elders; let Him but make the bodies of our church members His temples, and His enemies will be scattered, and they will consume away! I can well conceive, my brothers and sisters that such a prayer as this would well befit the tongue of a minister who lands as the first herald of the cross in some barbarian land! My brother, a solitary missionary in some populous city in China, might bow his knee, when first he attempts to preach, and say, “Rise up, O Lord! Let Your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate You flee before You.” A Williams landing upon Erromanga might say, even though his blood stained the wave, “Rise up, O Lord, and let Your enemies be scattered.” Livingstone and Moffat, toiling in the midst of the thick dense ignorance of central Africa, might frequently say from their innermost souls, “Rise up, O Lord, and let Your enemies be scattered.” Those brave men who risk all for Christ, not counting their lives dear unto them, that they might finish their course with joy—I think when they, as pioneers for Christ, bear the ark in the midst of the wilderness, they could not breath a better prayer for themselves, and you and I cannot do better than put it up for them now, “Rise up, O Lord! Let Your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate You flee before You.”

Brothers and sisters, this ought to be our prayer today, in anticipation of the millennial splendor. When it is to come, I do not know. Dr. Cumming may; but I am not as wise as he.

This I know, Scripture says He is to come, but I *think* it says, “He shall come in such an hour as you think not”—He comes as a thief in the night. Whether He shall come in the year 1866, I do not know. I hope He may, but I had rather that He should come in the year 1861. I should not like to postpone my watchfulness till 1866, but be always looking for Him. Whether He shall come in the morning or at cock-crow, in mid-day or midnight, blessed is that servant who when his Lord comes shall be found watching! Cast your eyes mentally over the world, and look at what a state it is in today. What wonderful changes have taken place, and yet how firm are the roots of evil! How tightly bound around the very granite of earth’s nature are the roots of the great upas tree of iniquity! Who can hope to tear it up by the roots, or cut down this towering cedar? See in one land where liberty was blustered, the lash still dripping with gout of gore; see in another land where there is much advancement in many things, the people priest-ridden, and borne down beneath the yoke! Look at the myriads who have never seen the great light of God—who sit in darkness, and in the valley of the shadow of death. Where is the arm, where is the arm that can put back the world upon its proper pivot? Where is the almighty power that can turn once again the pole so that earth shall stand no more oblique, but in uprightness roll before the throne of God? Where is the arm that can roll up the clouds as a mantle, and the mists as rags? There is but one! And our business is to cry today, “Rise up, O Lord! Let Your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate You flee before You.” Come quickly, come quickly—come, Lord Jesus! Then shall the world be rid of her tyrants; then shall slavery cease to be; then shall Your unsuffering kingdom come! Then the Great Shepherd shall reign, and everywhere shall He be extolled—“to Him shall be given of the gold of Sheba; prayer

also shall be made for Him continually, and daily shall He be praised.”

Before I pass from this head, quietly, for the edification of each individual Christian, let me remark that this prayer will suit your personal difficulties. Have you been in conflict lately? Has old Apollyon put you to your wit's end? Has he thrown his fiery darts at you thick as hailstones when they fell on Egypt? Have you been crushed beneath his foot? Can you not deliver yourself? Pray, “Rise up, O Lord, and let Your enemies be scattered.” Do your doubts prevail? Has your faith suffered an eclipse? Has a darkness that might be felt brooded over you? Say, “Rise up, O Lord.” All that is needed in the darkest night to clear it away is for the sun to rise. Battle not with your doubts yourself; wrestle not with your own fears. Pray, “Rise up, O Lord; these doubts of mine are enemies to Your honor—enemies to Your promise—enemies to Your truth! Rise up, O Lord, and let them flee before You.” You shall soon find peace and quietness, and in assurance and confidence, your souls shall rest. Are you beset today by men who hate you? As a child of God have you acted with such simplicity and integrity that men, not understanding you, have imputed to you wrong motives? Have you been slandered and abused? “Avenge not yourself, but rather give place unto wrath. Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” Let your prayer be, “Rise up, O Lord, and let Your enemies be scattered.” Are you serving God in some particular work where many are seeking to undo all that you can accomplish? Are you a city Missionary, and do you labor in the midst of a den of iniquity? Does it seem that what you do in one day is undone in one hour by others? Take it to the throne of grace! Say, “Rise up, O Lord, and let Your enemies be scattered.” Have you a great purpose conceived within your soul and does providence seem to stand in the way of its accomplishment? Has the Lord commanded you to some

special work, and do friends discourage, and enemies abuse? This prayer may suit you—“*Rise up, O Lord!*” It needs but that God should make bare His arm—His rising up is enough! As Luther said when opposing the Church of Rome—“They are not strong; God can overthrow them with His little finger.” And so say you! All the foes of the Church with all their battlements behind which they are entrenched, are nothing. They but seem to be. They are shadows, emptiness, nothing! Do you in confidence cry to your God—“Lord, do but rise; do but stand up; do but manifest Your power in any way whatever, and Your enemies are scattered at once, and those who hate You must flee before You forevermore”—

“When He makes bare His arm,
 what shall withstand His work?
 When He, His people’s cause defends, who,
 who shall stay His hand?
 Let us, in life and death,
 boldly Your truth declare
 And publish, with our last breath,
 Your love and guardian care.”

II. We shall now take the text **IN ITS REFERENCE—TO CHRIST**. Scripture is the best defender of Scripture. The diamond is not to be cut except with a diamond. We shall not understand one passage in the Word without another to explain it. That book has keys in its own self for all its own locks. The 68th Psalm informs us that the moving of the ark from the lower place of the city of David was typical of the ascending of Christ into heaven. Ah, I think, my dear brothers and sisters, the sorrowing church, when they beheld their Lord dragged by cruel men to judgment, when they heard Him accused and slandered, when they saw Him mocked and spit upon, must

have considered the battle to be a defeat. The tears must have stood in their eyes when they saw that He who was to be the Deliverer of Israel could not deliver Himself! How dense must have been the gloom over the fearing hearts of the church when they saw their King, their Head, dragged away and nailed disgracefully to the cross! And how dead must all their hopes have been when at last He bowed His head and gave up the ghost, and the sword pierced Him to the heart, and out there came the blood and water! Was it not the day of hell's triumph, the hour of earth's despair, the moment of heaven's defeat? No. It was the reverse of all this! That moment when Christ died, He gave the deathblow to all His enemies! That hour when they thought they were treading on Him, He was crushing them and bruising the serpent's head! Even when the Master was laid in the tomb, and had to sleep there His three days, as Jonah in the whale's belly—if the church had had faith, they might have come early on the dawn of the first day of the week, and standing outside the tomb, they might have begun to sing, "Rise up, O Lord! Let Your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate You flee before You."

I think it will be no fantastic imagination if we conceive that the angels did in that hallowed day come down from heaven before the sun had risen, knowing the appointed time, and while one of them rolled away the stone, the rest stood waiting on the wing and chanted, "Rise up, O Lord! Let Your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate You flee before You." I think I see the champion awake! He unbinds the napkin from His head; He sees again the light—He rolls off the grave clothes of the tomb, rolls them up and places them by themselves. He has risen! The stone has been rolled away. He comes forth into mid air. O Hell, how did you shake! O Death, how were you plagued! O Earth, your sun had indeed risen that day! Heaven, surely you did rejoice, and the song rolled mightily

along your streets! He rises and in that moment *sin* dies! The resurrection of Christ was God's acceptance of Christ's sacrifices. It was all that was needed. The handwriting of ordinances had once been nailed to the cross—they are now forever blotted out! Once had He borne the burden, but now the burden is removed from His neck. God accepts Christ as being justified, and therefore He rises from the dead, and by that act all His people are justified! "He rose again for our justification." The last hope of sin was crushed—its last pretense to any claim upon the people of God was hushed forever—its last arrogant claim to any right to their souls, or to their bodies, was quashed in heaven's high court when Christ, the Risen, came forth in pure white robes to demand the spotlessness of His people *in* Him because of His resurrection *for* them! Nor was sin alone that day scattered. Did not all the hosts of hell fall before Him? How glad they had been! All the demons had exalted themselves with the hope that their reign would now begin; loosed would be the iron chain; broken would be the bolts at the pit's mouth! Now might they come forth and revel, for the King who was to destroy them had been destroyed Himself! But when He rose, blank despair sat on the face of every fiend. How could they hope to kill His people? "Because He lives, they shall live also." How could they hope to condemn His people? "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is Christ who died, yes rather, that is risen again." Their hopes were gone! They were scattered, indeed! As the wax melts before the fire, so did their hopes melt away. Where was that day the boast of *death*? Had Christ remained in the jaws of death—had the Holy One seen corruption?—then had the redeemed remained the bond slaves of death, too. But He lives! He has broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder. Blessed are they who sleep, for they shall rise, too; He has led the way; the Breaker has gone up before them;

the King at the head of them. He has cleared the gap! They have but to follow and enter into the resurrection and the Life. That day I think all the *gods of the heathen* fell down! It is a tradition that at that hour when the veil of the temple was torn in two, all the gods tottered on their thrones—they did so spiritually—if they did not literally. That day slavery began to relax its grasp of its whip; that day the tyrant's throne began to shake; that day heaven shone with greater splendor, and hell was more murky and dull than it had been before; that day Evil heard its own death knell sound in the air, while Good heard the marriage-peal of rejoicing saints, while angels shouted over a rising Savior!

Nor was that all; after Christ had thus risen, you will remember that He rose again. He rose from the grave to earth—He next rose from earth to heaven. I think we may again conjecture that the angelic spirits came to meet the Master, and they said, “Rise up, O Lord! Let Your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate You flee before You.” Up He went, dragging sin, death and hell at His chariot wheels, scattering, as He rode along, those gifts which He had received for men. He went up with sound of trumpet, and with shouts of archangels! They near the gates—they sing, “Lift up your heads, O you gates, and be you lift up, you everlasting door, that the King of Glory may come in.” The angelic spirits on the other side chant, “Who is the King of Glory?” And once again, in waves of melody, they dash open the pearly gate singing again, “Lift up your heads, O you gates, and be you lift up, you everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in.” On, on He rides; having scattered forever all His enemies—having put all things under His feet, and being crowned King of kings and Lord of lords; the Wonderful; the Counselor; the Mighty God; the Everlasting Father; the Prince of Peace! Glory be unto Your name, Jesus; my soul warms with Your fire! Glory be unto

You! These hands would put the crown upon Your head—this voice would sing instead of preach Your praise! Blessed be You, God over all, blessed forever! You have ascended up on high; You have led captivity captive; You have received gifts for men. Rise up, Lord—rise up from the throne of Your majesty! Come and take the purchased possession! Come to claim Your own, and these hands shall welcome You with joyful applause, and this tongue shall welcome You with joyous songs. Yes, even these very feet shall dance like David before the ark, if You will but arise, for Your enemies shall be scattered and they who hate You shall flee before You!

III. But thirdly, WHAT MESSAGE HAS THIS TEXT FOR US; AND HOW MAY WE USE IT?

In the providence of God we, as a church and people, have often had to wander. This is our third sojourn within these walls. It is now about to close. We have had at all times and seasons a compulsion for moving; sometimes a compulsion of conscience; at other times a compulsion of pleasure as on this occasion. I am sure that when we first went to the Surrey Music Hall, God went with us. Satan went too. That frightful calamity, the impression of which can never be erased from my mind, turned out, in the providence of God, to be one of the most wonderful means of turning public attention to special services. And I do not doubt that it—fearful catastrophe though it was—has been the mother of multitudes of blessings! The Christian world noted the example; they saw its success; they followed it and to this day, in the theater and in the cathedral, the Word of God is preached where it was never preached before! Never could it be more manifestly seen than in that place, that the Word of God, when preached simply and earnestly, is the power of God unto Salvation to everyone who believes! In each of our relocations, we have had reason to see the hand of God, and here particularly, for there are very many

residents in the West end who have in this place come to listen to the Word, who probably might not have taken a journey beyond the river; and here God's grace has broken the hard heart; here have souls been renewed, and wanderers been reclaimed! Give unto the Lord, O you mighty; give unto the Lord glory and strength; give unto the Lord the glory that is due unto His name! And now, we journey to the house which God has in so special a manner given to us! I stand before you now as Moses stood before the people of Israel, and with faith like his, though not with such power and might as belonged to that honored servant of God, I would pray, "Rise up, O Lord! Let Your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate You flee before You."

"But what enemies do we have?" you ask. We have multitudes. We shall have to do battle in our new Tabernacle more nearly with that old enemy of the church, the Scarlet Beast—Rome has built one of its batteries hard by our place, and there is one who styles himself, "Archbishop of Southwark." Well, we shall have to do battle against him, and woe to you, Babylon! Woe to you, Babylon! Let but Christ be preached, and where is Anti-Christ? Let the cross be lifted up, and away with your crucifixes! Let the truth of God be declared, and where are your lies? This one Book, as the old Reformers used to say— this Book against all the popes and cardinals and priests and all the devils in hell! You have seen the picture, I dare say, of a pair of scales, in one of which there is a Bible, very heavy, touching the very ground; and in the other, there is a pope with his tiara on, and a cardinal with his scarlet cap, and a whole host of priests, and Virgin Marys and idols all piled up! There is another learned doctor just hooking on to the chains, and trying to pull down, if he can—but all their combined weight cannot reach anything like the weight of this one blessed Book! Why, a farthing candle of divine truth can set on fire a

whole prairie of popish error! It needs no great power in the preacher—he needs but to preach Christ's truth as he finds it in the Word of God, and he shall find it to be a blast from the nostrils of God to wither up the beauty of this towering cedar! What matters it to me whether it is a cedar or a fir? In the name of God, I feel my axe this morning! It is sharp and keen, and shall be laid to the roots of this tree, and if we cannot avail, yet other hands and other arms should wield that same axe so sharp and keen, and you, towering cedar, whose top is in the stars, but whose roots are in hell—you shall yet come down and the nations of the earth shall rejoice because of your fall!

Then we shall have another enemy. We have hard by us, almost as a next-door neighbor, Infidelity. *There* has been one of its special places for display. Well, well, Infidelity is but a very puny adversary comparatively; it is not half so cunning as Popery, and has nothing like its might. There is something in Romanism that can seize the human mind, but Infidelity is bare, bald, naked, and filthy! There are very few who will be overturned by that in an age when men are compelled to come more and more closely to God in the discoveries of nature, and the wondrous findings out of science. We are not afraid of you, O Infidelity! Come forth Goliath—it is but David who meets you—the ministers of Christ are but little compared with your stalking greatness and gigantic might; but the sling and stone of Christ, preached simply and preached affectionately, shall reach the forehead of your wisdom, and find you out and bring you down!

But, we have worse enemies than this! We shall have to deal with the indifference of the masses round about us, and with their carelessness concerning gospel truth; we shall have to deal with prevailing sin and corruption—sin which at nightfall, from the very steps of that edifice, may be seen in all the colors of its harlotry. And how will we deal with it? Will we

bring in some Socialist system? Shall we preach up some new method of political economy? No! The cross, the old cross is enough! This is the true Jerusalem blade, like that razor of old, with which the Tarquin cut the whetstone. We will but preach Christ as the sinner's Savior, the Spirit of God as applying Christ's truth to the soul, and God the Father in His infinite sovereignty saving whom He will, and in the bounty of His mercy willing to receive the vilest of the vile! And there is no indifference so callous, no ignorance so blind, and no iniquity so base—there is no conscience so seared, as not to be made to yield when God wills it before the might of *His* strength! "Rise up, O Lord! Rise up, O Lord! Let these Your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate You flee before You."

But, what is to be our prayer? Does it say, "Rise up, O *preacher*—occupy your pulpit"? True we may say, "Awake, Barak, awake and lead your captivity captive, you son of Abinoam." But that is *after* the battle is fought, not *before*! "Rise up, O *Lord*! O God the Father, rise up! Pluck Your right hand out of Your bosom, and let Your purposes be accomplished! O God the *Son*, rise up! Show Your wounds and plead before Your Father's face, and let Your blood-bought ones be saved! Rise up, O God the *Holy Spirit*! With solemn awe, we do invoke You! Let those who have resisted You give way! Come, melt the ice! Dissolve the granite! Let the hardest heart give way. Rise up, Lord, Father, Son, and Spirit, *we can do nothing without You*! But if *You* arise, Your enemies shall be scattered, and they who hate You shall flee before You."

Will you and I go home and pray this prayer by ourselves, fervently laying hold upon the horns of God's altar? I charge you, my brothers and sisters in Christ, do not neglect this private duty! Go, each one of you, to your chambers. Shut your doors, and cry to Him who hears in secret, and let this be the burden of your cry—"Rise up, O Lord! Let Your enemies be

scattered.” And at your altars tonight, when your families are gathered together, still let the same cry ring up to heaven! And then tomorrow and all the days of the week, and as often as we shall meet together to hear His Word and to break bread, cry, “Rise up, O Lord! Let Your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate You flee before You.” Pray for your children, your neighbors, your families, and your friends, and let your prayer be—“Rise up, O Lord. Rise up, O Lord.” Pray for this neighborhood. Pray for the dense darkness of Southwark and Walworth, and Lambeth. And oh, if you cannot pray for others because your own needs come so strongly before your mind, remember, sinner, all you need is but faith to look to Christ, and then you may say, “Rise up, O Lord! Scatter my doubts—kill my unbelief—drown my sins in Your blood! Let these, Your enemies, be scattered; let those who hate You flee before You.” Amen. Amen!

369 THE FIRST SERMON IN THE TABERNACLE

– ACTS 5:42

A Sermon
Delivered on Monday Afternoon, March 25th, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.”— Acts 5:42

MORE THAN 1,000 PERSONS assembled at 7 in the morning on Monday, March 18th, to offer solemn prayer. The Rev. C. H. Spurgeon presided, and first addressed the throne of grace; he was followed by one of the deacons, Mr. W. Olney, and one of the elders, Mr. H. Hanks; a student, Mr. Tubb; E. Ball, Esq., M.P. for Cambridgeshire; and Mr. G. Moore, deacon of the church. Fervency and intense earnestness marked every petition, and the brethren separated with a firm belief that the Lord would be with us.

The hymns to be used during the Dedication Service are printed as a penny hymn-book, but as many will not be able to obtain it, we subjoin two of the hymns sung at this first meeting. The first was composed by J. Tritton, Esq., for the occasion, and the second is a specimen of that joyous gospel which we trust will long be proclaimed within our hallowed walls—

Spirit of glory and of grace,
Your favor we entreat,
You true Shekinah of the place,
Where true disciples meet.

Oh, let the labor of our hands
Be precious in your sight
And long as this our temple stands,
Your presence be its light.
Here float the gospel's banner wide
O'er faithful hearts and brave;
And here, O Jesus crucified,
Come forth in power to save!
Make bare Your arm, You King of saints,
To bring dead souls to life;
And when Your children's courage faints,
Renew them for the strife.
No Bochim this—a place of woe—
But Pisgah's holy steep;
Where dying ones their heaven shall know,
Ere yet they fall asleep.
While we who live shall urge the race,
If Jesus be but here,
Spirit of glory and of grace,
Revealing Christ, appear!

Saved from the damning power of sin,
The law's tremendous curse
We'll now the sacred song begin
Where God began with us.
We'll sing the vast unmeasured gram
Which, from the days of old,
Did all His chosen sons embrace,
A sheep within His fold.
The basis of eternal love
Shall mercy's frame sustain;
Earth, hell, or sin, the same to move,
Shall all conspire in vain.

Sing, O you sinners bought with blood,
Hail the great Three in One
Tell how secure the covenant stood
Ere time its race begun.
Ne'er had you felt the guilt of sin
Nor sweets of pardoning love,
Unless your worthless names had been
Enrolled to life above.
O what a sweet exalted song
Shall rend the vaulted skies,
Then, shouting grace, the blood-washed throng
Shall see the Topstone rise.

The Bazaar was held during the week, and crowned with abundant success. On Monday, March 25th, the Rev. O. Rogers presided over the second prayer meeting, and addressed the brethren in a sweet and savory manner upon, "The house of God, the gate of heaven."

The first sermons, it will be observed, are admirably adapted to be companion sermons, but the ministers were quite unaware as to what text each had selected.

"And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ."— Acts 5:42

I DO NOT KNOW whether there are any persons here present who can contrive to put themselves into my present position, and feel my present feelings. If they can effect that, they will give me credit for meaning what I say, when I declare that I feel totally unable to preach. And, indeed, I think I shall scarcely attempt a sermon, but rather give a sort of declaration of the truths of God from which future sermons shall be made. I will give you bullion rather than coin; the block from the quarry, and not the statue from the chisel. It appears that the

one subject upon which men preached in the apostolic age was *Jesus Christ*. The tendency of man, if left alone, is continually to go further and further from God, and the church of God, itself, is no exception to the general rule. For the first few years during and after the apostolic era, Christ Jesus was preached, but gradually the church departed from the central point, and began rather to preach ceremonials and church offices rather than the person of their Lord. So has it been in these modern times—we also have fallen into the same error, at least to a degree—and have gone from preaching Christ to preaching doctrines about Christ, inferences which may be drawn from His life, or definitions which may be gathered from His discourses. We are not content to stand like angels *in* the sun—our fancies disturb our rest, and must fly on the sunbeams—further and further from the glorious source of light! In the days of Paul, it was not difficult at once, in one word, to give the sum and substance of the current theology. It was Christ Jesus. Had you asked any one of those disciples what he believed, he would have replied, “I believe Christ.” If you had requested him to show you his Body of Divinity, he would have pointed upward, reminding you that divinity never had but one body, the suffering and crucified human frame of Jesus Christ who ascended up on high. To them Christ was not a notion refined, but unsubstantial—not a historical personage who had left only the savor of his character behind, but whose person was dead; to them He was not a set of ideas, not a creed, nor an incarnation of an abstract theory—but He was a person—one whom some of them had seen, whose hands they had handled—no, one of whose flesh and blood they had all been spiritually made to eat and drink! Christ was Substance to them, I fear He is too often but shadow to us. He was a reality to their minds; to us—though, perhaps, we would scarcely allow it in so many words—rather a myth than a man; rather a person

who was, than He who was and is and is to come—the Almighty!

I would propose (and O may the Lord grant us grace to carry out that proposition from which no Christian can dissent), I would propose that the *subject of the ministry* of this house, as long as this platform shall stand, and as long as this house shall be frequented by worshippers, shall be the person of Jesus Christ. I am never ashamed to avow myself a Calvinist, although I claim to be rather a Calvinist according to Calvin, than after the modern debased fashion. I do not hesitate to take the name of Baptist. You have there [pointing to the baptistery] substantial evidence that I am not ashamed of that ordinance of our Lord Jesus Christ! But if I am asked to say what is my creed, I think I must reply—"It is Jesus Christ." My venerable predecessor, Dr. Gill, has left a body of divinity admirable and excellent in its way; but the body of divinity to which I would pin and bind myself forever, God helping me, is not his system of divinity or any other human treatise, but Christ Jesus, who is the sum and substance of the gospel; who is in Himself all theology—the incarnation of every precious truth—the all-glorious personal embodiment of the way, the truth, and the life!

This afternoon I will try to describe *the subject, Christ Jesus*; then secondly, to speak for a little while upon *its comprehensiveness*; then to enlarge upon some of *its excellences*; and conclude by testing *its power*.

I. First, then, the **SUBJECT**.

They continued both to teach and preach *Jesus Christ*. To preach Jesus Christ aright, we must preach Him in His *infinite and indisputable Godhead*. We may be attacked by philosophers, who will either make Him no God at all, or one constituted temporarily and, I must add, absurdly, a God for a season. We shall have at once upon us those who view Christ as a prophet,

as a great man, as an admirable exemplar; we shall be assailed on all sides by those who choose rather to draw their divinity from their own addled brains, than from the simplicity of Holy Writ. But what matters this? We must reiterate again and again the absolute and proper Deity of Christ; for without this, we are in the position of those described by the prophet—"Their tacklings are loosed, they could not well strengthen their mast," and soon will our enemies prevail against us, and the prey of a great spoil shall be taken. Take away the divinity of Christ from the gospel, and you have nothing whatever left upon which the anxious soul can rest! Remove the Word who was in the beginning with God, and who was God, and the Joachim and Boaz of the temple are overturned! Without a divine Savior, your gospel is a rope of sand; a bubble; a something less substantial than a dream. If Christ is not God, He is the basest of impostors. He is either one of two things—very God of very God, or else an arch-deceiver of the souls of men—for He made many of them believe He was God, and brought upon Himself the consequences of what they called blasphemy; so that if He is not God, He is the greatest deceiver that ever lived! But He *is* God; and here, in this house; we must and will adore Him! With the multitude of His redeemed we *will* sing—

“Jesus is worthy to receive,
Honor and power divine;
And blessings more than we can give,
Be Lord forever thine.”

To preach Christ, however, we must also preach *His true Humanity*. We must never make Him to be less man-like because He was perfectly divine. I love that hymn of Hart which begins—

“A man there was—a real man,
Who once on Calvary died.”

“*Real* man!” I think we do not often realize that manhood of Christ; we do not see that He was bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh—feeling, thinking, acting, suffering, doing just like ourselves—one of our fellows, and only above us because He is “exalted with the oil of gladness above His fellows.” We must have a human Christ, and we must have one of real flesh and blood, too—not of shadows or filmy fancies. We must have one to whom we can talk, one with whom we can walk, one—

“Who in His measure feels afresh
What every member bears;”

who is so intimately connected with us in ties of blood that He is as with us, the head of the family, firstborn among many brethren. I am never gladder than when I am preaching a *personal* Christ. A doctrinal Christ, a practical Christ, or an experimental Christ, as some good men make Him to be according to the temper of their minds, I do not feel to be sufficient for the people of God. We need a *personal* Christ! This has been a power to the Romish church—a power which they have used for evil, but always a power. They have had a *personal* Christ, but then, it has either been a baby Christ in His mother’s arms, or else a dead Christ upon the cross. They never reached the force of a real full-grown Christ, one who not only lived and suffered, but who died and rose again, and sits at the right hand of God, the Head of the church, and the one ruler of men. Oh, we must bring out more and more clearly each day the real personality of the Redeemer in His complex person! Whatever we fail to preach, we must preach Him! If we are wrong in many

points; if we are but right *here*, this will save our ministry from the flames! But if we are wrong here, however orthodox we may pretend to be, we cannot be right in the rest unless we think rightly of Him!

But, further—to preach Christ Jesus it is absolutely necessary we should preach Him as *the only mediator between God and man*. Admitting the efficacy of the intercession of *living* saints for sinners, never for a moment denying that every man is bound to make supplication for all ranks and conditions of men—yet must we have it that the only mediator in the heavens and the only direct Intercessor with God is the “man Christ Jesus.” No, we must not be content with making Him the *only* mediator—we must set aside all approach to God in any way whatever, except by Him! We must not only have Him for the priest, but we must have Him for the altar, the victim, and the offerer, too! We must learn in full the meaning of that precious text—“Christ is all.” We must not see a part of the types here, and a part there, but all gathered up in Him, the one door of heaven, the one crimson way by which our souls approach to God! We must not allow that approaches can be made in human strength, by human learning, or by human effort; but *in* Him, and *through* Him, and *by* Him, and in dependence *upon* Him must all be done between God and man! We have no wings, my brothers and sisters, with which to fly to heaven; our journey there must be on the rounds of Jacob’s ladder. We cannot approach God by anything *we have*, or *know*, or *do*. Christ crucified and He alone, must lift us up to God! And more—we must preach Christ in the solitariness of His redemption work. We must not permit for a moment the fair white linen of His righteousness to be stained by the patchwork of our filthy rags. We must not submit that the precious blood of His should be diluted by any offering of ours co-acting for our salvation. He has, by one sacrifice, forever put away sin! We shall never

preach Christ unless we have a real atonement. There are certain people nowadays who are making the atonement, first a sort of compromise, and the next step is to make the atonement a display of what ought to have been, instead of the thing which should have been. Then, next—there are some who make it to be a mere picture, an exhibition, a shadow—a shadow, the substance of which they have not seen. And the day will come, and there are sundry traces of it here and there, in which in some churches, the atonement shall be utterly denied, and yet men shall call themselves Christians, while they have broken themselves against the cornerstone of the entire system! I have no kith nor kin, nor friendship, nor Christian amity, with any man whatever who claims to be a Christian, and yet denies the atonement! There is a limit to the charity of Christians, and there can be none whatever entertained to the man who is dishonest enough to occupy a Christian pulpit, and to deny Christ. It is only in the Christian church that such a thing can be tolerated! I appeal to you—was there ever known a Buddhist acknowledged in the temple of Buddha, who denied the basic doctrine of the sect? Was there ever known a Muslim Imam who was sanctioned in the mosque, while he cried down the prophet? It remains for Christian churches, only, to have in their midst men who can bear the name of Christian, who can even venture to be Christian teachers, while they slander the Deity of Him who is the Christian's God, and speak lightly of the efficacy of His blood, who is the Christian's atonement! May this deadly cancer be cut out, root and branch, and whatever tearing of the flesh there may be, better cut it out with a jagged knife, than allow it to exist, because no lance is to be found to do it daintily. We must have, then, Christ in the efficacy of His precious blood as the only Redeemer of the souls of men, and as the only mediator, who, without assistance

of ours, has brought us to God, and made reconciliation through His blood.

Our ministry will scarcely be complete unless we preach *Christ as the only lawgiver and Rabbi of the church*. When you put it down as a canon of your faith that the church has right and power to decree rites and ceremonies, you have robbed Christ at once of His proper position as the only teacher of the church! Or when you claim the office of controlling other men's consciences by the *decree* of the church, or the *vote* of a synod, apart from the authority of Christ, you have taken away from Christ that chair which He occupies in the Christian church as the teacher in the great Christian school, as the Rabbi, and the only Rabbi of our faith. God forbid that we should hold a single truth except on His authority! Let not our faith stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God! You refer me to the writings of Doctor this, and Doctor the other—what are these? The words of *Christ*—these are truth—and these are wisdom. You bring me authority from the practice of a church three or four centuries removed from the crucifixion as the proof of the existence of a certain ceremony, and the righteousness of certain ecclesiastical offices. What is your proof worth? If Christ has not specially ordained it, and if He has not commanded His people to obey it, of what value is any rite whatever? We acknowledge Christ is ordaining all things for His church, and presenting that church with a finished code of law from which any deviation is a sin, and to which any addition is a high crime! Any church officer who is not ordained of Christ occupies an office which he ought to resign. Any person who practices a ceremony for which he has not Scriptural authority should renounce it, and any man who preaches a doctrine for which he has not Christ as his certifier, should not demand for it the faith of men!

But I fear there are times coming when the minister will not be true to his duty unless he goes further, and preaches Christ as *the sole King of the church*. There has been a disposition on the part of the state, especially with regard to the Free church of Scotland, to exercise power and judgment over church decrees. No king, no queen that ever lived, or can live, has any authority whatever over the church of Christ! The church has none to govern and rule over her but her Lord and her King. The church can suffer, but she cannot yield; you may break her confessors alive upon the wheel, but she, in her uprightness, will neither bend nor bow. From the sentence of our church there is no appeal whatever on earth. To the court of heaven a man may appeal if the sentence of the church is wrong, but to Caesar, never! Neither the best nor the worst of kings or queens may ever dare to put their finger upon the prerogative of Christ as the head of the church. Up, church of God! If once there are any laws of man passed to govern you, up—dash them in pieces! Let us each catch up the war cry and uplift the lion standard of the tribe of Judah; let us challenge the kings of the earth and say, “*Who shall rouse Him up?*” The church is queen above all queens, and Christ her only King. None have jurisdiction or power in the church of Christ save Jesus Christ Himself! If any of our acts violate the civil laws, we are men and citizens, and we acknowledge the right of a state to govern us as individuals. None of us wish to be less subjects of the realm because we are kings and priests unto God. But as members of Christian churches, we maintain that the excommunication of a Christian church can never be reversed by the civil power, or by any state act, nor are its censures to be examined, much less to be removed, mitigated, or even judged. We must have, as Christ’s church, a full recognition of His imperial rights, and the day will come when the state will not only tolerate us as a mere society, but admit

that as we profess to be the church of Christ, we have a right by that very fact to be self-governing, and never to be interfered with in any sense whatever, as far as our ecclesiastical affairs are concerned.

Christ must be preached, then, and exalted in all these respects, or else we have not preached a full Christ; but I go one step further. We have not yet mounted to the full height of our ministry unless we learn to preach *Christ as the King of kings*. He has an absolute right to the entire dominion of this world! The Christian minister, as ordained of God to preach, has a perfect right, in God's name, to preach upon any subject touching the Lord's kingdom, and to rebuke and exhort even the greatest of men. Sometimes I have heard it said, when we have canvassed the acts of an emperor or senator, "These are politics." But Christ is King of politics, as well as theology. "Oh, but"—they say—"what have you to do with what the state does?" Why, just this—Christ is the head of all states, and while the state has no authority over the church, yet Christ Himself is King of kings, and Lord of lords! Oh, that the church would put her diadem upon her head, and take her right position! We are not slaves! The church of God is not a groveling corporation bound forever to sit upon a dunghill—never queen was so fair as she, and never robe so rich as the purple which she wears! Arise, O church! Arise—the earth is yours, claim it! Send out your missionary, not as a petitioner to creep at the feet of princes, but as an ambassador for God to make peace between God and man! Send him out to claim the possession which belongs to you, and which God has given to you to be yours forever and ever by a right which kings may dispute, but which one day everyone of them shall acknowledge!

The fact is, we must bring *Christ, Himself*, back into camp once more. It is of little use having our true Jerusalem swords, and the shields and the banners, and the trumpets and the

drums—we need the King, Himself, in the midst of us. More and more of a personal Christ is the great lack of the time. I would not wish for less doctrine, less experience, or less practice—but more of all this put into Christ, and Christ preached as the sum and substance of it all!

II. But, secondly, I am now to speak, for a short time, upon the **COMPREHENSIVENESS OF THE SUBJECT** which the text announces.

It is an old and trite saying that the ministers of the gospel may be divided into three kinds—the doctrinal, the experimental, and the practical. The saying is so often repeated that very few would contradict it. But it betrays at once, if it is true, the absence and lack of a something essentially necessary for the church's success. Where is the preacher of Christ without *all* of these? I propound this, that if a man is a preacher of Christ, he is doctrinal, experimental, and practical! The *doctrinal* preacher generally has a limited range. He is useful, exceedingly useful; God constitutes him a barrier against the innovations of the times—he preaches upon his subjects so frequently that he is well versed in them, and becomes one of the armed men about the bed of Solomon. But suppose the doctrinal preacher should have it all his own way, and there should be none others at all—what would be the effect? See it in our Baptist churches about 150 years ago. They were all *sound* and sound asleep! Those doctrines had preached them into lethargy, and had it not been for some few who started up, and proposed the missions for the heathen, and who found but little sympathy at first, the church would have been utterly inactive. Now, I would not be harsh with any, but there are still some brothers whose preaching might justly be summed up as being doctrinal, nothing more than doctrinal, and what is the effect of their ministry? Bitterness! They learn to contend not only earnestly for the faith, but savagely for it! Certainly we

admire their earnestness, and we thank God for their soundness; but we wish there were mingled with their doctrine a something else which might tone down their severity, and make them seek rather the unity and fellowship of the saints, than the division and discord which they labor to create.

Again, I will refer you to the next class of preachers, the *experimental*. How delightful it is to sit under an experimental preacher! Perhaps of all ministries, this one is the most useful—he who preaches the doubts, the fears, the joys, the ecstasies of the people of God. How often do the saints see the footsteps of the flock, and then they find the shepherd under an experimental minister! But do you know the effect of an experimental minister, purely so, I mean—when all else is put aside to make room for experience? There is one school of divines always preaching the corruption of the human heart. This is their style—*“Unless you are flayed alive by the law; unless you are daily feeling the utter rottenness of your heart; unless you are a stranger to full assurance, and do always doubt and fear; unless you abide on the dunghill, and scrape yourself with a potsherd, you are no child of God.”* Who told you that? This has been the preaching of some experimental preachers, and the effect has been just this—men have come to think the deformities of God's people to be their beauty! They are like certain courtiers of the reign of Richard III, who is said by history to have had a hump upon his back, and his admirers stuffed their backs that they might have a graceful hump, too! And there are many who, because a minister preaches doubts and fears, feel they must doubt and fear, too, and then, that which is both uncomfortable to them, and dishonoring to God comes to be the very mark of God's people. This is the tendency of experimental preaching, however judiciously managed, when ministers harp on that string, and on that alone. The tendency is either to preach the people into a soft and savory state, in which there is not a bit

of manliness or might—or else into that dead and rotten state in which corruption outswells communion, and the savor is not the perfume of the king’s ointments, but the stench of a corrupt and filthy heart!

Take also the *practical* preacher; who would say a word against this good man? He stirs the people up, excites the children of God to holy duties, promotes every excellent objective, and is, in his way, an admirable supplement to the two other kinds of ministers. But sit under the practical preacher—sit under him all the year round, and listen to his people as they come out. There is one who says, “*The same thing over again—Do, do, do, nothing but do!*” There is a poor sinner yonder just gone down the front steps. Follow him. “Oh,” he says, “I came here to find out what *Christ* could do for me, and I have only been told what I must do for myself.” Now, this is a great evil, and persons who sit under such a ministry become lean, starving things! I would that practical preachers would listen to our farmers who always say it is better to put the whip in the manger, than upon the horse’s back; let them feed the people with food convenient for them, and they will be practical enough, but all practice and no promise, all exhortation, and no sound doctrine will never make the man of God perfect and zealous for good works.

But what am I driving at in bringing up these three sorts of ministers? Why, just this—to show you that there is one minister who can preach *all* this—without the dangers of any one of the others, but with the excellences of the whole. And who is he? Why, any man in the world *who preaches Christ*! If he preaches Christ’s person, he must preach *doctrine*. If I preach Christ, I must preach Him as the covenant head of His people, and how far am I, then, from the doctrine of election? If I preach Christ, I must preach the efficacy of His blood, and how far am I removed, then, from the great doctrine of an effectual

atonement? If I preach Christ, I *must* preach the love of His heart, and how can I deny the final perseverance of the saints? If I preach the Lord Jesus as the great head and King, how far am I removed from divine sovereignty? Must I not, if I preach Christ, personally, preach His doctrines? I believe they are nothing but the natural outgrowth of that great root thought, or root substance, rather—the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He who will preach Christ, fully, will never be lax in doctrine; and what better *experience* can you preach than in preaching Christ? Would you preach the sufferings of the saints—preach *His* agony and bloody sweat, His cross and passion—for the true sufferings of the saints are in fellowship with Him. If you would preach their joys—preach *His* resurrection, *His* ascension, and *His* advent. You are never far from the joys of the saints when you are near to the joys of Christ; for did He not say, “My joy shall be in them that their joy may be full”? And what better *practice* can be preached than preaching Christ? Of every virtue, He is the pattern of the perfection of human character; He is the very mirror of everything that is holy, and of good report. He is the abiding incarnation! He cannot fail, then, to be a good doctrinal, experimental, practical preacher who preaches Christ. Did you ever know a congregation to grow less spiritual by a minister preaching Christ? Did you ever know them get full of doubts and fears by preaching Christ? Did you ever hear of their getting lax in sentiment by his preaching Christ? Did you ever hear a whisper that men became unholy in their lives because they heard too much about Christ? I think that all the excellence of all ministers may be gathered up into the teaching of the man who preaches Christ every day in the week. And there will not be any of the evils connected with the other forms of preaching.

III. I shall now pass on to notice some of the surpassing excellences of the subject.

First, he will always have a *blessed variety* in his preaching. In Australia, I have heard that the only change for the backwoodsmen is to have one day damper, tea and bread—the next day, bread, damper and tea; and the next day, tea, bread and damper. The only variety some ministers give is one Sunday to have depravity, election, and perseverance, and the next Sunday, election, perseverance, and depravity. There are many strings to the harp of the gospel. There are some brethren who are so rightly charmed with five of the strings, which certainly have very rich music in them that they never meddle with any of the other strings. Cobwebs hang on the rest, while these five are pretty well worn out. It is always pretty much the same thing from the first of January to the last of December. Their organ has very few keys and upon these they may make a very blessed variety, but I think not a very extensive one. Any man who preaches Christ will ensure variety in his preaching. He has all manner of precious perfume, myrrh and aloes and cassia. He has all sorts of music, he has everything that is sweet to the ear—he has all manner of fruits. This tree of life bears twelve manner of fruits. *He* is all manner of raiment. *He* is golden raiment for beauty. *He* is the warm raiment for comfort. *He* is the stout raiment for harness in the day of battle. There are all things in Christ, and he that has Christ will have as great a variety as there is to be found in the scenery of the world where no two brooks are alike and no two rivers wind in precisely the same manner and no two trees grow in precisely the same form. Any other subject you may preach upon till your hearers feel satisfied—but with Christ for a subject, you may go on and on and on, till the sermon swells into the eternal song and you begin to sing, “Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.”

There is yet another excellence about this subject, namely, that *it suits all sorts of people*. Are there rebels present? Preach

Christ! It will suit them. Are there pardoned sinners present? What is better to melt their hearts than the blood of the Lord Jesus? Are there doubting Christians? What can cheer them better than the name of Christ? Are there strong believers? What is stronger meat than Jesus crucified? Are there learned, polite, intellectual hearers? If they are not satisfied with Christ, they ought to be! Are there poor, ignorant, unlettered men? Jesus Christ is just the thing to preach to them—a naked Christ to their simple ears! Jesus Christ is a topic that will keep in all climates; land in New Zealand in the midst of uncivilized men; move off to another post, and stand in the midst of poetical Persia or fickle France—the cross is adapted to all! We need not inquire into the doctrinal opinion of our hearers. If they are high, I am sure Christ will suit *them*. If they are low, if they are true believers, I am sure Christ Jesus will suit. No Christians will reject such meat as this. Only prepare it and with a hot heart and serve it up on the table and they will be satisfied and feed to the full so that there is adaptation as well as variety in this subject.

IV. But more than this, I must add and this will bring me to my last point, for my time flies—there is a power about this subject when it is preached with the demonstration of the Spirit, which is not found in any other. My brothers and sisters, what power there is in this subject to promote *the union* of the people of God! There is a man there, he is almost a Puseyite. “I do not like him,” says one. Stop till I tell you something more about him, and you will! There is another man there, a Presbyterian—true blue. He cannot bear Independency, or anything but Presbytery—a covenant man. “Well,” says one, “I like him a little better. But I do not suppose we shall get on very well.” Stop! I will tell you some more about him. There is another man down there. He is a very strong Calvinist. “Humph,” says one, “I shall not admire *him*.” Stop, stop! Now, here are these

three men. Let us hear what they say of each other. If they know nothing of each other except what I have stated, the first time they meet, there will be a magnificent quarrel! There is yonder clergyman—he will have little fraternity whatever with the ultra-Evangelical, while the Presbyterian will reject them both, for he abhors black prelacy. But, my dear brothers, all three of you, we of this congregation will approve of you all, and you will approve of one another when I have stated your true character. That man yonder, whom I called almost a Puseyite, was George Herbert! How he loved the doornails of the church! I think he would scarcely have had a spider killed that had once crept across the church aisles. He was a thorough churchman; to the very center of the marrow of his bones, but what a Christian! What a lover of his sweet Lord Jesus! You know that hymn of his which I have so often quoted, and mean to quote a hundred times more—“How sweetly does my Master’s sound,” and so forth? I hear a knock at the door. “Who is that?” “Why, it is a very strong churchman.” “Do not show him in. I am at prayer. I cannot pray with him.” “Oh, but it is George Herbert!” “Oh, let him in, let him in! No man could I pray better with than Mr. Herbert. Come in, Mr. Herbert; we are right glad to see you; you are our dear companion—your hymns have made us glad.”

But who was that second man, the Presbyterian, who would not have liked George Herbert at all? Why, that was Samuel Rutherford! What a seraphic spirit! What splendid metaphors he uses about his sweet Lord Jesus! He has written all Solomon’s Song over without knowing it. He felt and proved it to be divine. The Spirit in him re-dictated the song. Well now, I think, we will introduce Mr. Rutherford, and Mr. Herbert, together, and I am persuaded, when they begin to speak about their Master, they will find each other next of kin! And I feel sure that, by this time, Samuel Rutherford and

George Herbert have found each other in heaven, and are sitting side by side! Well, but then we mentioned another. Who was that high Calvinist? He was the man who was called the Leviathan of Antinomians. That he was a leviathan, I will grant, but that he was an Antinomian is false. It was Dr. Hawker! Now, I am sure George Herbert would not have liked Dr. Hawker, and I am certain that Dr. Hawker would not have liked George Herbert; and I do not suppose that Samuel Rutherford would have had anything to do with either of them! “No, no,” he would say, “your black prelacy I hate.” But look at Hawker; there is a sweet spirit, he cannot take up his pen but he dips it in Christ, and begins to write about his Lord at once, “Precious Emmanuel—precious Jesus.” Those words in his morning and evening portions are repeated again and again, and again. I recollect hearing of Mr. Rowland Hill, that he said to a young man who was at tea with him one night, when he was about to go—“Where are you going?” “Oh,” he said, “I am going to hear Dr. Hawker, at St. George’s in the Borough.” “Oh, go and hear him,” he said, “He is a right good man, worth hearing! But there is this difference between him and me—my preaching is something like a pudding, with here and there a plum. But Dr. Hawker’s is all plum.” And that was very near the mark, because Dr. Hawker was all Christ! He was constantly preaching of his Master; and even if he gave an invitation to a sinner, it was generally put in this way—“What say you? Will you go with *this man*, and be married and espoused unto *Him*?” It was the preaching of a personal Christ that made his ministry so full of marrow and fatness!

My dear friends, let a man stand up and exalt Christ, and we are all agreed! I see before me this afternoon, members of all Christian denominations—but if Christ Jesus is not the topic that suits you, why then, I think we may question your Christianity. The more Christ is preached, the more will the

church prove and exhibit, and assert and maintain her unity; but the less Christ is preached, and the more of Paul, and Apollos, and Cephas, the more of strife and division, and the less of true Christian fellowship.

We will only mention the power of the preaching of Christ *upon the heart of sinners*. There is a man, now a member of my church, whose conversion was owing to the reading of that hymn—

“Jesus, lover of my soul.”

“Ah,” he said, “does Jesus love *my* soul; then how vile I have been to neglect Him.” There are scores whose conversion is distinctly and directly traceable, not to doctrine—though that is often useful—nor experience, nor practice, though these are fruitful, but to the *preaching of Christ*. I think you will find the most fertile sermons have always been the Christliest sermons. This is a seed which seldom rots under the clod. One may fall upon the stony ground, but it more often happens that the seed breaks the stone when it falls, and as Christ is a root out of a dry ground, so this finds root for itself even in dry, hard, stony hearts. We ought to preach the law; we ought to thunder out the threats of God; but they must never be the main topic. Christ, Christ, Christ, if we would have men converted! Do you want to convince yonder careless one? Tell him the story of the cross. Under God it will arrest his attention, and awaken his thoughts. Would you subdue the carnal affections of yonder degenerate? Preach the love of Christ, and that new love shall uproot the old. Would you bind up yonder broken heart? Bring forth Christ, for in Him there is a cordial for every fear. Christ is preached, and we do rejoice, yes, and will rejoice, “For He is the power of God unto salvation unto everyone who believes.” Judge not, my dear brethren, any man’s ministry! The world has

too often condemned the man whom God intended to honor. Say not of another, “He can do no good, for his language is rough and rude.” Say not of another, that his style is too often marred with flippancy. Say not of a third that he is too erudite or soars too high; every man in his own order! If that man preaches Christ, whether he is Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, we wish him God speed, for God will bless the Christ he preaches, and forgive the error which mingled with his ministry. I must even frankly admit the truth of many a criticism that has been uttered on my ministry, but I know it has been successful, and under God it has been because I *have* sought to preach Christ! I say that without boasting or egotism. If I had not done so, I had no right to be a minister of Christ at all, and as I claim to be God’s minister, I will and must declare it—whatever I have not preached, *I have preached Christ*, and into whatever mistakes I have fallen, I have sought to point to His cross, and say, “Behold the way to God.” And if you see others preaching Christ, be not their foe; pray for them, bear them in your arms before God—their errors may yet be outgrown, if they preach Christ—but if not, I care not what their excellency may be, the excellency shall die and expire like sparks that go out in darkness! They have not the fuel of the flame, for they have not Christ Jesus as the substance of their ministry.

I entreat you, in closing, your earnest prayer, each one of you, that in this house, as well as in all the places of worship round about, Christ may evermore be preached! And I may add my own sincere desire that this place may become a hissing and the abode of dragons, and this pulpit be burned with fire if ever any other gospel is preached here than that which we have received of the holy apostles of God—of which Jesus Christ, Himself, is the chief cornerstone. Let me have your incessant prayers. May God speed every minister of Christ. But where there is so large a field of labor, may I claim your earnest and

constant intercessions, that where Christ is lifted up, men may be drawn to hear, and afterwards drawn to believe that they may find Christ the Savior of our soul! “He who believes and is baptized, shall be saved; he who believes not shall be damned.” “Repent and be converted, every one of you,” said Peter. Yet again said Paul to the jailer, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, and your house.” God give us grace to believe, and unto Him be glory forever and ever. Amen.

**370 EVANGELICAL CONGRATULATIONS –
PHIL. 1:18**

**A Sermon
Delivered on Monday Evening, March 25th, 1861,
by the
REV. R. W. BROCK
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“Christ is preached, and I therein do rejoice, yes, and will
rejoice.” – Acts 5:42**

HOW PAUL would have rejoiced had he been living now! Judging from the effect that was produced upon his mind by the evangelical labors at Rome, what do you think, brothers and sisters, would have been the effect produced upon his mind by the evangelical labors in London? Because the brethren there were waxing bold in the name of Christ, he was glad. The fact that in the metropolis of the empire the glad tidings were proclaimed filled him with the most profound satisfaction. His heart was, and his heart still would be, joyful in the Lord! And yet I take it that the ministry of the gospel in Rome must have been comparatively on a small and insignificant scale. I suppose that in proportion to the population, and in proportion to the size of that city, the preaching must have been very circumscribed, and all things considered, considerably obscure. No preacher had lifted his voice from the terrace of the Capitol, no congregation had been gathered into the great area of the Coliseum, no public announcement had been made over all Rome, that if the people would flock to the Pantheon, they

might hear about the incarnation of the Son of God. Anything like that would have kindled Paul's gladness into rapture! Christ preached out on the Campus Martius, or in the Hall of Minerva, or on the platform of the Athenaeum at Rome would have left him nothing this side of Paradise to desire! As it was, his cup was running over. Men were told in honest speech about the one who had come down from heaven, who had come at the Father's bidding to proclaim His will and to accomplish His purposes. They had been told of a friend that "sticks closer than a brother;" of the advocate and the mediator between God and man. And, the Spirit of all grace concurring with that which had been preached, the apostle was fully persuaded in his own mind that they had heard words whereby they would be saved, and that the promise of the life that now is, and the promise of the life that is to come, would by them be personally enjoyed. Hence he said, "I do rejoice," and then emphatically again, "Yes, and will rejoice."

But how he would have rejoiced, or how he would rejoice if he were living now! Why, for every one man who preached the gospel in his time, there are thousands who are preaching it now; for every hundred hearers of that day, there are thousands upon thousands now; and for every one place into which the citizens of Rome might go to hear about Christ and Him crucified, I need not say that there are many and ever multiplying places now. And you, my brothers and sisters—the pastor of this church, and those connected with him—you have added to the number, thank God, of those places, and we are tonight to celebrate the completion of one, I suppose, of the best places that has ever been raised for the honor and for the glory of Christ! From the first day until now, from its foundation to its top stone, you have begun and continued and ended—your desire, your prayer, your purpose, your ambition having been just simply this—that here the Redeemer's name

may be magnified, that here His great salvation in all simplicity may be proclaimed! And we have come here tonight to assure you of our sympathy, to give to you the pledges of our brotherly affection, and in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, to bid you heartily God speed—

“Peace be within this sacred place,
And joy a constant guest;
With holy gifts and heavenly grace,
Be our attendance blessed.”

Well, the apostle rejoiced, and would have rejoiced a great deal more had he occupied the place which I am occupying now! My purpose is to show to you tonight why there should be such rejoicing in connection with the preaching of Christ crucified.

Various reasons, of course, could be assigned—at least several reasons could be thrown into various forms. I throw my idea of the matter into this form—by the preaching of Christ, the renovation of mankind is *intelligently proposed*, and not only so, but it is *graciously guaranteed*. Given—a ministry that shall speak out openly what Christ is, what Christ has done, what Christ is doing, what Christ requires, what Christ administers, and the renovation of our fellow man is not only intelligently proposed but is thereby on God's part graciously guaranteed. I rejoice that the very first text from which my brother has preached in this noble edifice was, though unfeignedly, so singularly coincident with my own—“They ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ.” The preaching and the teaching of Christ was the very first message with which he opened his service here, and I take that among other things to be a token for good.

I. In the first place, we rejoice in the preaching of Christ because thereby **THE RENOVATION OF FALLEN MAN** is intelligently proposed.

High time, by common consent, that something was done in that direction! Of course everybody admits the foundations are out; and while many persons admit it, they also go about to suggest improvement, amendment and cure. You will give me your attention while I recapitulate some of the projects which they suggest in order to the attainment of an end which is desired by us all. This is one suggestion—Give the people, they say, a good, sound, secular education; impart to them the elements of knowledge, and when they are apprehended and understood, then educe and cultivate the corresponding results. Let them know about their own bodies and their own minds; let them know something about the chemistry of common life; let them know something about their relations to one another and to society at large, and then when you have done that, there is some hope that their renovation may be obtained.

This is another suggestion—Give to the people sound remunerative employment, recognize the right of every honest and industrious man to live, and then act upon your recognition by not preventing or interfering so that he cannot live. A fair day's wages, they say, for a fair day's work; the ample recompense for the ungrudging toil. Save your countrymen from the dread of pauperism, and never insult them any more by the sanctimonious condescension of some of your so-called Christian charities. Let every man be enabled to earn his bread in the sweat of his brow, and thus you may hope that their renovation will be obtained. This is another suggestion—Confer upon them honorable enfranchisement. Barring the criminal and the imbecile, esteem every man throughout the country to be a free man. If you expect him to pay the tribute, give him a voice in the imposition of that tribute; let him be

regarded by yourselves, and equally with yourselves, and in all practical respects touching the commonwealth, let him be regarded as a free man, and then you may hope that the renovation so desirable will be obtained. This is another suggestion—Take care to raise them into better and more civilized habits. See where they live; see how they eat and drink—mark their demeanor, one towards another, and towards the community at large. Change all that, or get them to change it so that they shall prefer cleanliness to filth, frugality to wastefulness, the seemly garment to the rotten rags, and the well-ventilated and the welllighted apartment to the moldy attic in the roof, or to the dark infectious, rotten cellar underground. And when you have done *that*, you may hope that so far their renovation will be obtained. And this is another suggestion—let the people have their tastes cultivated. Introduce them to the great works of ancient and modern art, throw open your museums, take them into your art galleries, admit them into your artistic and your antique salons, fire their love for the beautiful, kindle it yet more brightly and more brightly still! Insure their rejection of the base through their predilection for the refined, and accomplish their abhorrence of the groveling through their rapture with the sublime, and when you have done that, you have done much to obtain the renovation that we all desire.

I believe these are the great suggestions of the men who designate themselves, and I respectfully regard their designation, as the philosophical philanthropists. These are the suggestions which those men make; and they say get all such things done, and then you will have society just what society ought to be both in regard to God and in regard to man. But now, can you look at these suggestions for a single moment without marking a most fatal defect throughout them all? They tell you about dealing with a man *externally*, but not a word

about dealing with him *internally*. He is to be better cultured, better dressed, better housed, and all that, but as to the man, the subject of all that we are talking about—as for the man essentially and inherently considered, there is nothing whatever done, and after all that philosophy and philanthropy together have accomplished, the man’s heart is just what it was before! Well, I say in any company, in any place, what I say here—that if you leave the man’s natural heart untouched, you may culture and cultivate him as you may, there is that which will laugh all your culture and all your cultivation to scorn! If a man’s *heart* is right, his life will be right; if a man’s *heart* is right in its relations towards God and towards man, his life will be right, but not else. And no man’s heart on earth is right. No! There is a universal, an absolute and unvarying necessity, as our Lord brought it out so distinctly with Nicodemus, “You must be born-again.” “You must be born-again;” and choosing as we do to sit at His feet, we accept the great prophetic deliverance from heaven, and authorized by that, we pronounce that all the suggestions which I have referred to are worth nothing! No, my brothers and sisters; to educate the people is expedient, to remunerate them incumbent, to enfranchise them desirable, to civilize them important, and to cultivate their tastes, if you will, laudable in all respects—but if you were to do all that tomorrow with every man, and women, and child in England, you have not put them into their right position, you have not inspired them with the right dispositions, you have not set them on the prosecution of the right career. A man may be educated and yet licentious—he may be well-paid and yet vindictive; he may be enfranchised and yet covetous; he may be civilized in all his habits, and yet intemperate; he may be a man of cultivated taste, and yet he may have no love for his neighbor and no love for his God.

Why, what dishonesties, what startling dishonesties have been perpetrated by men who have had all the benefits of our foremost colleges and of our first-rate schools! What debaucheries, what fearful debaucheries have been perpetrated by men whose barns have been filled with plenty, and whose presses have burst out with new wine! What inhumanities, what cruel inhumanities have been perpetrated by men who have boasted, and who have blustered and who have brawled that they were free! What falsehoods, what shameful, incredible falsehoods, have been perpetrated by men who have been clothed in purple and fine linen, and have fared sumptuously every day! And what profanities, cross and blasphemous, have been perpetrated by men who have been the warmest admirers of Michelangelo and Rubens, and who have been among the choicest of your connoisseurs, the very choicest of them in art! I need not adduce the evidence. It would insult and grieve the congregation if I did. Everybody here knows how that evidence accumulates. No, no, education and morality are not coincident—competence and morality are not coincident—civilization and morality are not coincident—liberty and morality are not coincident— and refined and cultivated tastes are not coincident with morality so that if you have the one, you are sure to have the other! Brothers and sisters, you may deal with man's external condition as scientifically as you can, and with his character—so far as the outward character goes—as philosophically as you can; but as I said before, there is an underlying aboriginal peculiarity of his nature that laughs all your science and your philosophy to scorn! You cannot turn his condition into a paradise; you cannot convert him into a king and a priest unto God. Everywhere, without the exception of a land under heaven, and without the exception of an individual under heaven, men need the clean heart and the right spirit—the new creation in Christ Jesus. They are dead in

trespasses and sins; and they must be made alive unto God before you will get for them the renovation or the improvement which is so much desired.

Hence my rejoicing, and hence, as I believe, Paul's rejoicing, were he here, because of the preaching in a spacious place like this—because of the *preaching of Christ!* brothers and sisters, it will be preaching that goes down to the bottom of things; it will be preaching that deals not with the symptoms, but with the sources of human guilt; it will be preaching that takes all profanity and debauchery, and dishonesty, and inhumanity, and falsehood, and deals with them, mark—not in their overt acts so much as in their rudimental germs. My brother's preaching here will declare that if you could do all which our philosophic philanthropy desires, man would go wrong, and be wrong, and presently would actually go on to justify and to glory in the wrong. It will be the preaching, in one word, that declares the absolute necessity of a new creation, of a *new creation in Christ Jesus!* It will deal not with conjecture but with certainty, not with theories but with facts, not with experiments but with realities, not with the words which man's wisdom teaches but with the words which the Holy Spirit teaches! It will deal not with the superficial, temporary, partial amendment, but intentionally at least with a profound, a radical, a fundamental, an everlasting cure! The preaching will never ignore one peculiarity of our nature because it is embarrassing, nor overlook another because it is inconvenient, nor tremble at another because it happens to be possessed of some authority and power. I anticipate and rejoice that here will stand the preacher to declare in the good mother tongue of us all, that the tree is bad, but that, by God's grace, it can be made good; that men are living unto themselves, but that, by God's grace, they can be brought to live unto Him; that the divine image is defaced, but that that divine image can be restored; that where sin is reigning

even unto death, there divine grace may reign instead, through righteousness, even unto everlasting life; and therein we do rejoice and if you are of my mind therein tonight we will *all* rejoice!

Think of this place, look around it. Conceive of it devoted to a purpose like this, and with tendencies and probabilities—for I am speaking only of these now—with tendencies and probabilities like these before our minds, is there a man or a woman listening to me who does not lift up his heart and rejoice and thank God now? Oh, I see the banner floating here that will be displayed because of the truth. I hear the trumpet blowing here that will proclaim the message of God's own mercies to man; I see the embassy going on here touching reconciliation between God and man, and I see the confederacies of Christian brotherhood here provoking one another to love and to good works! Our country will be the better for this place; we shall be relieved of our pauperism after all, and saved from our licentiousness, and rescued from our immorality. Yes, and we shall be rescued, too, from the superstition that would endanger our immortality by its sacerdotal, and wicked, and mischief-making tendencies; from the superstition that would put our immortality in jeopardy; and from the atheism that would laugh that immortality to scorn. It will be that our own land, so happy amid the nations of the earth already, shall be the royal habitation of righteousness, and joy, and peace in the Holy Spirit. Christ is preached. He has been preached here today already, and "Therein I do rejoice, yes, and will rejoice."

II. Secondly, we rejoice in the preaching of Christ because thereby the renovation in question is **GRACIOUSLY GUARANTEED**.

There can be conceived of by us a wise and sound plan that may, nevertheless, be frustrated when all comes to all by

unknown and unperceived opposition. There are men all round about us who say, “Yes, and you ought to remember that and hold your peace, for just as beyond any question civilization will fail, so Christianity will fail likewise.” And they apparently have a case; let us look at it. They say, “What can you do *there?*” And then, they point us to the masses rising up early, sitting up late, and eating the bread of carefulness, if in hundreds of cases they can get the bread to eat. “What can you do *there?*” And they point us to our merchants, our physicians, our statesmen, our artisans, our bankers who are all with one accord apparently looking for what they preposterously call the main chance. “What can you do *there?*” And then they point us to religious assemblies where superstition and formalism have everything their own way, and where because of sacramental rites performed upon unconscious infants, people are told that they are members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the Kingdom of heaven. “What can you do *there?*” And then they point us—alas, how they can point us— to multitudes whose licentiousness and degeneracy are gradationally gross, and perhaps to quite as many multitudes whose licentiousness is gradationally refined, and then they say, “Now look at them, look round and tell us whether such ones will ever be prevailed upon to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world?” And they take our own utterance, our own Scripture, and they say, “You may well enough call them ‘dead in trespasses and sins.’”

Brothers and sisters, we looked at the other case—let us look at this. I acknowledge that there are about it indications that ought to make every thoughtful Christian a great deal more thoughtful and a great deal more Christian, too. Oh, the domination of ungodliness is desperate, and its tyranny is terrific, and its wisdom is superhuman, and its mastery of man is malignant in the last degree! How one stands sometimes and

looks at it dismayed! If it would be content to take what is inherently abominable in itself, it would not be so bad. But it comes and takes what is in itself inherently *amiable and moral*, and with that it tries to do the work of death! It takes our legitimate occupations, and makes them a decoy to irreligiosity; it takes the amenities of our social life, and perverts them to ungodliness; it takes the great charities of our homes, and makes them antagonistic to devotion; yes, and it goes to the very altar of God, and it makes the sacred and solemn ordinances of the church an opiate—pleasant enough—but dreadfully and fatally poisonous to the soul! So, I look as they bid me look, and then think of all the particulars and resources of my case again; and as I do so, I say, “Your premises apparently are sound, but your conclusion is altogether unsound; the church is not always to be second to the world; Christ is not always to be resisted by the devil.” No, no, my brothers and sisters, the church is to take precedence of the world; Christ is to be triumphant locally and before the world; Psalms and hymns, and songs of praise are to come up into the ascendant, and knees are to bow, and tongues are to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father! And for believing like that, in the face of such a case, I offer these as my reasons.

1. With the preaching of Christ, God has formally connected the exertion of His power. “With God all things are possible.” I sometimes apprehend that good men are forgetful of this and they are for lying down and dying as though God had somehow or other ceased to be able to do everything. “With God all things are possible.” And should He gird His sword upon His thigh, should He go about to show Himself strong, I ask what are the world, the flesh and the devil in their worst combinations, then? What adversary would not succumb then—what adversary would not become a friend? “Yes,” you

say, “almightiness in action would do all that we require.” brethren, I speak of almightiness in action *now*. It is not simply that in this place there will be the message of God. Along with that message there will be God Himself. It is not that the word will be preached merely, but of His own will God will beget men by the word. It is not simply that the gospel will be proclaimed, but that that gospel is the power of God unto salvation. My brother will not stand here as the statesman stands in the senate house or the advocate at the bar, or the lecturer on the platform of an Athenaeum. He will stand here, I doubt not, as wellaccoutered and well-furnished as they are mentally, intellectually and so on. But eloquent and mighty in the Scriptures as he or any other man may be, it is neither that eloquence, nor that might which will affect the end. These things and the things like unto them are the vehicles through which God sends down His blessing, the instrumentalities by which God accomplishes His work, the means and medium by which it pleases God to work. He will stand here a fellow-worker with God, so that the word will be in demonstration of the Spirit and in power. Mark—the human will be confirmed by the superhuman, the natural will be accompanied by the preternatural, the earthly will be helped and succored and blessed by the divine. With all that may be persuasive or argumentative or pathetic, with all that may be properly and intentionally adapted to commend the truth to every man’s conscience in the sight of God, there will be the energy whereby God is able to subdue all things unto Himself. “Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.” And so in the face of all that seems to be opposed to us we do rejoice and we will rejoice because God’s own channel for the communication of His power is the preaching of Christ.

2. Secondly, with the preaching of Christ, God has been formally pleased to associate the accomplishment of His

purposes. He has His purposes. “God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son, that whoever believes on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” The Lord told Paul at Corinth, when Paul was all but giving way to our common unbelief—He told him to stay there and not to hold his peace. Why? “Because I have much people in this city”; and emboldened and encouraged by that, he stayed there a year and six months! Well, those purposes which thus come out in the Scriptures of truth which are possessed by us—those purposes are to be accomplished! “By two immutable things in which it is impossible that God should lie, His Son is to see of the travail of His soul until He is satisfied. God is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.” But now, how are those purposes accomplished? Mark! “Go into all the world, and *preach* the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; he who believes not shall be damned.” Mark again—“It has pleased God by the foolishness of *preaching* to save them who believe.” Mark again—“Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed; how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a *preacher*?” Mark again—“There is one mediator between God and man—the man, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time; whereof I am ordained a *preacher*.” Do you see my drift? The *preaching*, obviously, demonstratively, stands connected with the *purpose*, which cannot fail—bound up with the everlasting covenant which is ordered in all things and sure! “The word of the Lord endures forever, and this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.” I think therefore of our friend occupying this place, and of other men occupying similar places, and I take up with Paul’s Jubilate again! He will stand here, and this will be the plea, “As though God did

beseech you by me.” That will be the plea, “As though God did beseech you by me.”

And do I speak to men tonight who do not understand as soon as they reflect how such a plea must chasten the preacher; how it must humble and yet dignify him; how, if he has a soul, it must bring out his soul and all that is within? “God by me beseeching you.” What man so affected and impressed can be careless, heedless, prayerless, selfish? Oh, the plea does wonderful work for the minister! And what does it do for a people who will listen? Why, it arrests them, takes hold upon them, keeps hold of them, and God being present with His blessing, and never lets them go! And what does it do in regard to the Spirit of all grace, the author and giver of all the gifts you need? That plea adopted, earnestly and devoutly used, will bring the preacher into the fullest sympathy with the Holy Spirit of promise, as he stands here pleading, expostulating, comforting, encouraging, warning—with the plea moving everything within him, and everything around him, the divine purposes are recollected and they are accomplished—until he and the brotherhood will have to say, “Who has begotten us these? The young men and maidens, the old men and children, and the strangers who are within your gates.” Yes, and let us hope that some of you who have heard all the sermons up to now and have never surrendered yourselves to Christ—that you will be given to them in answer to their prayer; not the units, but the groups; not the individuals, but the many, born “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” Oh, what will this place be then? Brethren, the angels will have large employment in this Tabernacle! Heaven will have much to do in what is passing here! “For God is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent. Has He said it, and shall He not do it, has He spoken, and shall He not make it good?” Of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all

things, and He will come and stand by our brother here, proving Himself to be “God over all, blessed for evermore.”

3. Lastly—God has been pleased formally to identify the preaching of Christ with the manifestation of His sympathies.

Why, we could tell of much already—we could tell of much which has been done in our own time, and not upon a small scale either. But let us rather remember what God did in the earlier times of our evangelical history. What happened at Jerusalem? Believers were the more added unto the Lord, multitudes both of men and women, and “a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.” What happened at Ephesus? The name of the Lord Jesus Christ was glorified, and “the men who had used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men, and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.” What happened all through Macedonia? “God makes us,” said the apostle, “to triumph everywhere in Christ.” And what happened upon the larger scale through proud and philosophic Greece, and through lordly and domineering Rome? Why, we have it on the testimony of our enemies, that the preaching turned the world upside down! The *preaching* did, mind you! Before the preacher came, everything was earthly, and sensual, and devilish; after the preacher came, there was the alteration, the improvement, the renovation of which we speak. Not by the preacher’s unassisted, original, independent effort—the excellence of the power was of God, and not of man! Mighty through God were the preachers throughout Greece and Rome, and Asia Minor, and mighty, too, through God will the preacher be here! Say that London is as corrupt as Corinth was, and that it is as worldly as Rome was, and that it is as rationalistic as Athens was, and that it is as dead set against Christ and His gospel as Jerusalem was, and you cannot very well say more than that. Yet He that stood by the preacher in

those places, and in those times, will stand by the preacher here! “Go, go, stand and speak in the temple all the words of this life.” On Sabbath mornings he will hear that, and at other times besides, and when his courage and his heart may fail, he will hear besides, “Go, for I have much people in this city;” and so sent, he goes, and so going, what ensues? Participation of the divine nature is vouchsafed unto the people, sympathy with the divine purposes is induced within the people, communications of divine grace are given to the people, life everlasting becomes possessed by the people; “Heirs of God” are they, and “joint-heirs in Jesus Christ.”

Brothers and sisters, I speak boldly as I ought to speak. It is a vile and wicked slander that our doctrines of grace lead to licentiousness. Never was there anything more tangibly contrary to the truth of God! And all the history of the church being my proof tonight—where Christ is preached as He ought to be preached, after the apostolic manner—neither licentiousness nor wickedness of any kind, will abound there! No, there will be honest dealing, kindly neighborhood, patriotic loyalty, world-wide philanthropy, truth-telling speech; there will be a race of men loving God with all their hearts, and *therefore* their neighbor as themselves! You cannot alter that order; you will never get a man to love his neighbor as himself till he has first of all loved God! And what we are looking for, and hoping and praying for being done is that order will supervene here. Loving the Lord their God with all their hearts, therefore the people will love their neighbors as themselves; and not being the amended ones, but the regenerated ones; not being the improved ones, but the twice-born ones; not being the corrected ones but the newly-created ones—the law will have no need to arm itself for them, justice will never need to be on the alert for them, humanity will never need to tremble for them! No, and the purest chastity will never need to blush

for them. Their bodies will be the Temples of the Holy Spirit, and their members will be the members of Christ, sacred to His service in every way in which they can be employed. The tree having been made good, there will be fruit unto holiness, and the end of that shall be everlasting life! Well then, who does *not* rejoice? Everybody responds, “I rejoice.” We all rejoice because of what will be done by the preaching of Christ here! We know that this place will be the birthplace of precious souls through successive generations; we know that this place will be like a great big human heart, throbbing, pulsating with beneficence and benevolence obtained directly from the cross of Christ; and this great big human heart will be propelling far and near, a thousand influences which shall be for “glory to God in the highest, for peace on earth, and good will towards men.” It will be none other than the House of God and the very gate of heaven!

If indeed, the preaching were of another kind from what we know it will be, it would be a very different thing; if I thought the preaching here was to be the preaching of Christ robbed of His divinity— the pure and perfect man to admiration, but not the co-equal and the co-eternal Son of God—I could not rejoice! But I know that it will be preaching in which Christ’s proper deity will be spoken out unambiguously, and unequivocally, and systematically. I know that He will be declared here to be the one that “sticks closer than a brother,” and at the same time, our Lord and our God. If I thought that the preaching here was to be the preaching of Christ as merely an example and not as a sacrifice, or as a sacrifice in some vague, indeterminate, rationalistic, deceitful, false sense of submitting His own will to His Father’s, I could not rejoice. But I believe that it will be the preaching of Christ’s propitiatory sacrifice, as a proper sin-offering, and that these words will bring out the aspect of the case as presented here—

“He bore that we might never bear
His Father’s righteous ire.”

If I thought that the preaching here was to be the preaching of Christ with any hesitancy as to His power, or His readiness to save the transgressor, I would not rejoice; but I believe that there will be no approach to such hesitancy, that it will be Christ with His precious blood cleansing from all sin, Christ able to save even to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him. If I believed that it would be the preaching of Christ independently or apart from His jurisdiction; if I thought it would be represented here that Christ had nothing to do with the lives, and the conduct of His people—I would not rejoice. I believe, on the contrary, that His royal and kingly character will be insisted upon, and that every Believer will be told, “At your peril do you make Christ the minister of sin.”

If I believed that the preaching here was about to be at variance with the scholarship, the thoughtfulness, the uprightness, the spiritualmindedness, of the past ages of the church, I could not rejoice. I believe, on the contrary, that it will be preaching in strictest harmony with the sound evangelical scholarship, and with the lofty evangelical integrity, and with the concordant evangelical orthodoxy of all the ages that are past! I stand here as I would stand in some other places that I know to resent the imputation, and to show cause, if necessary, for the resentment that in preaching Christ as we do, we have no scholarship, no talent, no honesty, no spiritual-mindedness on our part. Brothers and sisters, it is not so! I speak unto wise men, and ask you to judge what I say. If I believed that the preaching here would regard all godly mystery as a scandal, and all godly boldness as a calamity, and all godly aggressiveness as a nuisance, and all godly joyfulness as an offense, I certainly could not rejoice; but I believe that the

preaching here will hold all godly mystery in veneration, will strengthen and enforce all godly boldness, will honorably vindicate all godly aggressiveness, and will give, on behalf of godly joyfulness, the conclusive argumentation, and the kindly and the pathetic appeal. And so believing, I ask again whether we shall not close our gathering, our service, tonight, with one great song and psalm of thanksgiving to the Lord our God!

The maxim, the watchword, the war cry here will be Revelation, not intuition; Faith, not imagination; the Scriptures, not tradition; the Gospel, not philosophy; the Person, not the proxy; Grace, not merit; the Cross, not the crucifix; the Savior, not the church! I, believing that, and knowing that, hearing indeed from all the brotherhood constituting the church here, a great, unanimous, hearty, irrepressible AMEN, as I am thus speaking on their behalf—let us, I say, take the cup of salvation, and let us call upon the name of the Lord! There may be others, I dare say there are, who have to sing the melancholy dirge—we have to sing the exultant psalm! They may, if they will, chant the lamentable elegy—we mean to chant the triumphant canticle! They may go and perform, if they must, the service for the dead—we come here to celebrate the great festival of a living Gospel, a living Church and a living Savior!

“Let the vain world pronounce its shame,
And fling their scandals on Your cause;
We come to boast our Savior’s name
And make our triumphs in His cross!
With joy we tell a scoffing age,
He who was dead has left the tomb!
He lives above their utmost rage,
And we are waiting till He come.”

Christ is preached! Therein do I rejoice, and therein I will rejoice! And now, brothers and sisters let us have the rejoicing in a joyous collection. I catch that response of yours, and I catch it as an honest man with his eyes upon honest men; and if you go—in the main, at all events—with what I have now been saying, I ask you that you will give the evidence of your sympathy with me, and then and thereby the evidence of your sympathy with our brethren, in making your collection tonight the outward and the visible sign of a gladness of your inmost soul, which amounts, approximately at least, to the joy that is unspeakable and full of glory!

371 OPENING SERVICES

Tuesday Evening, March 26th, 1861,

MEETING OF THE CONTRIBUTORS At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

ON TUESDAY EVENING, March 26th, the first of the Public Meetings in connection with the opening of the Tabernacle took place. It was limited exclusively to the Contributors to the Building Fund, of whom more than 3,000 were present. Up to the moment, **Sir HENRY HAVELOCK** took the Chair; the platform below the pulpit presented a busy scene, as it was here the collecting cards had to be turned in. Some half-dozen gentlemen officiating as clerks were for about an hour unceasingly engaged in receiving and recording the contributions handed in by some hundreds of volunteer collectors, the respective amounts varying from a few pence up to many pounds. Rich and poor vied with each other, and it would be hard to say which excelled; the whole matter seemed to awaken a personal interest in each individual.

When the period arrived for commencing the business of the meeting, **Mr. SPURGEON** gave out the third hymn, which had been composed expressly for the occasion—

“Sing to the Lord with heart and voice,
You children of His sovereign voice;
The work achieved, the temple raised,
Now be our God devoutly praised.
For all the treasure freely brought—

For all the toil in gladness worked—
For warmth of zeal and purpose strong—
Wake we today the thankful song,
Lord of the temple! Once disowned,
But now in worlds of light enthroned—
Your glory let Your servants see
Who dedicate this house to Thee!
What if the world still disallows—
Our corner and our top-stone You!
Your shame and death and risen joy,
Shall here our ceaseless thought employ.
Be Your dear name like ointment shed
O'er every soul, on every head.
Make glorious, oh our Savior King,
The place where thus Your chosen sing.
More grand the temple and the strain
More sweet, when we Your heaven shall gain;
And bid, for realms where angels dwell,
Our Tabernacles here, farewell!"

After offering up a few words of prayer and reading portions of the 35th and 36th of Exodus, descriptive of the offerings brought to the Tabernacle by the Jews in the wilderness, he briefly introduced Sir Henry Havelock, the Chairman for the evening.

The CHAIRMAN said he hoped he would be excused if he were at a loss how to address such a meeting as this, because he supposed that a similar assembly in a building like this had never been addressed before in England. The kind way in which they had greeted him gave him encouragement, and was sufficient to enable him to give utterance to thoughts, which, but for their hearty welcome, he would hardly have power to express. He had been expressing a doubt to a friend near him,

that he would not be able to get through the duties which devolved upon him satisfactorily, but his friend remarked to him that this was not an occasion when speaking was required, for the occasion spoke for itself. He thought it did speak for itself. They could not look around that magnificent building without feeling that it was entirely of God's doing. The progress which had been made in that work of God was the most extraordinary thing in modern church history! It began two and a half years ago with fear and trembling; but from the first, they had been triumphantly advancing, and they had seen the work grow larger and larger, until now they saw it completed. It was impossible to come to any other conclusion but that God had worked mightily with His people. Then, let them look at their pastor, and at the different phases through which he had passed, and they would agree with him that God had been with him in each of them. At one time, it was said the work would break down in a month, but it did not come to pass; it was also said that it was a passing *excitement*, and would soon come to an end, but he thought their appearance there did not look like passing excitement! What excitement there might be before the end of the meeting, he could not foretell; but if they were really mad, as some people said, there was certainly a great deal of "method in their madness." He was no orator, and they should not expect a long address from him, but he thought they ought to thank God for the blessings which He had showered upon that building at each stage of its erection. There had been nothing like it accomplished before! Let them hope it was but the beginning of many such undertakings destined to be carried to a similarly successful end. Their pastor, in speaking to him of the building, pointed out some deficiencies in the inner room. He said that everything was not as yet quite comfortable, and remarked that it was like a newly married couple coming to a new house. Now, he (the

Chairman) hoped the simile would be carried a little further, and that the church would not only be like the newly married couple in a new house, but like the noble matron who had become the mother of many children! They had heard that the small sum of £3,000 was required for the complete payment of every liability connected with past expenditure, and from what he saw there that night, he felt convinced that all would be speedily given. And when no more should be needed, that need not prevent them from displaying their generosity in the cause which they had at heart. They had just had a precedent in Scripture brought before them where the people of old were told they need not bring any more to the tabernacle; but they had not been told so there! He therefore hoped they would still contribute to the work until they had accomplished everything which they desired. It was intended that after the building itself had been paid for, the remainder of the money which might be raised would be devoted to the education of young men intended for the ministry; in addition to that, there was accommodation beneath the church for about 2,000 scholars; and he was sure that was a purpose for which their contributions would still be given, even though the money might not be needed for the mere bricks and mortar of the structure. He trusted they would excuse him saying more; but he could not conclude without thanking them kindly for so patiently listening to the remarks he had made.

The REV. C. H. SPURGEON said they were all aware that there was a happy contest between himself and his congregation. It was a very bad thing certainly for a newly married couple to fall out, especially in the scarcely furnished home, but it so happened that the contest in their case was as to which should bring the better dowry to stock the house with. The minister should in every case do his share of the work, or how could he with any conscience appeal to his flock? Now, he

had undertaken that he would bring in £1,000 between the month of January and the opening of the building. He had fulfilled his pledge; in fact, he had gone somewhat beyond it. They might remember that on the last occasion they left off with a drawn battle. Having two or three bankers behind him, who generously came to his aid, he had outstripped the congregation by some 30 shillings. However, he considered it an undecided battle, and if they could beat him tonight, he would be very glad. He then read over a list of the various contributions he had received, amounting to £1,170 14s. There was still, he said, a shot or two in the locker to win the victory with, even should their industry and zeal excel in their results what he had accomplished. They might say the amount was £1,200 and it was matter of wonder and thankfulness that the bazaar had realized a clear £1,200. He ought to state, and he should not be saying more than should be said, that there were many ladies in the congregation who had been working very, very hard, and had always been at the side of his beloved wife whenever there had been a meeting for work; still, the main anxiety and arrangement had rested upon her, and had it not been for those ladies, who, like the women of Israel, brought the labor of their hands, the work could never have been so singular a success. Of old it was written (Exo 35:25-26)—“And all the women who were wise-hearted did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, both of blue and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine linen. And all the women whose heart stirred them up in wisdom spun goats’ hair.” So now, they did the same. Thus had the willing-hearted people of God, each in their own way, brought an offering unto the Lord of gold, and silver, and copper, and blue, and purple, and scarlet so that the house of the Lord might be completed; So large a sum as had been realized spoke well, both with respect to individual co-operation, and to the sympathy of the Christian

public. The result which they had attained was exceedingly satisfactory, because almost every farthing which they required had been raised. He would not say the whole of it; but they would, no doubt, have the amount in a few minutes. The top-stone would soon be brought forth with shouts of praise! How had such a result been attained? The reply was that there had been three main elements in it. The first was *faith in God*. At the beginning of the year, they needed £4,000 and an entry to this effect would be found in the church book, signed by himself and the deacons—"This church needs rather more than £4,000 to enable it to open the New Tabernacle, free of all debt; it humbly asks this temporal mercy of God, and believes that for Jesus' sake, the prayer will be heard and the gift bestowed, as witness our hands." As for himself, he never had a doubt about the opening of that place free from debt since he attached his name to that entry. The work in which they had been engaged had been a work of faith from the beginning to the end; the Lord has fulfilled His promise to the letter—for according to our faith has it been done to us. Why not have faith in God for temporals? Will He ever allow His own cause to lag for lack of means? In this case, as the need grew, the supply increased; as the proportions of the project were enlarged, the liberality of the Christian public increased; and even during the last three or four weeks, he had been amazed at the contributions which he had received. Contributions had come by post varying in amount from pounds to a few shillings; they had come from America, from Australia, and from almost every country in the world, from men of all ranks, and persons of every denomination! Universal sympathy had been shown, and most of the donations from readers of the weekly sermons were accompanied by letters so affectionate and encouraging, that it was a happy thing that such an opportunity had been given for the utterance of up to now unknown Christian love! Faith in

God had done much of that which had been accomplished, and unto a faithful God be glory. But “Faith without works is dead”—very dead indeed in chapel building! One must *work* there, and he could say he had toiled as hard as any man could to accomplish his purpose.

The house had been built for God, and his sole objective with regard to its future income was that it might be applied to the tuition and training of young men as ministers, that thus the church in the Tabernacle might be a helper to many of the churches of Christ. But besides individual energy, there had been a third thing, *combination of numbers* laboring with one aim. Many poor persons had brought offerings which they could ill afford to spare, and no one could ever know how many of them had received back, indirectly from himself, the amount they had given, but which they would have been grieved if he had refused. He publicly thanked all his generous friends throughout the world for their cooperation, and he would thank them all, individually, if it were possible to do so. Before the Chairman sat down, Mr. Spurgeon paid a warm tribute to the memory of General Havelock, the Chairman's father. They might not, he said, be aware that there were only two dissenting lords, and those two were Baptists; there were only two dissenting baronets, and those two were Baptists also. Both of them had earned their titles fairly— those were Sir Samuel Morton Peto, and Sir Henry Havelock; the one the king of spades, and the other the savior of our empire in India. He was sure the country would for many years remember the name of Havelock. As a Christian minister, he was no apologist for war, but it was a righteous cause in which Havelock was engaged; it was rather to save than to subdue; to rescue women and children than to slaughter men; but he was sure that when his fame as a warrior should cease to be heard, his name as a Christian would live. He was glad to see Sir Henry Havelock

with his father's people in a Baptist Tabernacle; he hoped they would see him for years to come, and that the blessing of the God of his father might richly rest upon him.

Mr. MUIR said there was no one who attended the last meeting held two months ago, but must have felt a desire to do all they could to show their zeal in raising that building, and he was very glad the wish had now been accomplished. At the time to which he referred, it was his intention to take a journey to the north, and he thought he would do what he could to further the work. He accordingly took a number of cards with him in order to collect contributions. Some of his friends gave very liberally, although he must confess that he had more difficulty in obtaining contributions from others. He then read his list of contributions, which amounted to £123 14s.

The REV. F. TUCKER of Camden Road Chapel said he could echo every word that had fallen from Mr. Spurgeon with regard to the gentleman who occupied the chair that evening. Long, long indeed, would it be before to any Baptist, or to any Christian, or to any Englishman, the name of Havelock would be a common or indifferent word. He had himself come there that evening partly from sympathy, for he knew what it was to have to do with a chapel debt; and although the debt upon his chapel was only about one-tenth part of that which rested upon theirs; he only hoped it would cost him one-tenth part of the trouble! One of the most difficult things in the world to deal with was the tail of a debt. They might bury the body of the animal, but if the tail still was above ground—it was like the tail of the rattlesnake—it made a great and formidable, and alarming noise although the body had been safely interred. Now, that night, he understood they intended to bury the rattlesnake, tail and all, and over that grave no one might write "*Resurgam*." He had come, however, personally to congratulate them. It was not the first time that he had stood within these

walls. He was at the first public meeting held in that place some few months ago. It was then in its *deshabille* and yet, he looked around the place with admiration and he felt, as he told his brother Spurgeon, as he supposed the captain of some ordinary seafaring steamer must have felt when he first stood in the hold of the Great Eastern. The Great Eastern was now on the Gridiron in Milford harbor. They intended tonight to float their magnificent vessel off the Gridiron, and might God grant her a long and prosperous voyage. He congratulated them not merely on the size of the great building, but also on its beauty. He did not think it was anything too large. His own chapel would seat about 1,100 persons, and it was large enough for him. But if John Bunyan were on the earth, should they like to confine him to a little company of eleven hundred persons? If George Whitefield were on the earth, should they like to limit him to a little company of eleven hundred? Now they had got Charles Spurgeon on earth—should they shut him up in a little company of eleven hundred? As to the beauty of the building, no words he could use could adequately describe it. He did, from his heart, congratulate them on the size and beauty of the edifice. But he had also to congratulate them upon another matter—upon the doctrines that would be preached in that grand building! He was not there to give account of every word that his brother Spurgeon had ever uttered, nor of every aspect of every doctrine which he had presented; but as an older man than his brother, he was sure he would not be thought impertinent if he said that he, with many of his brethren throughout the country, had watched Mr. Spurgeon's course with intense and prayerful interest. They could see his growth and development towards liberality and symmetry of creed which had filled all their hearts with gratitude and joy! Just as dear Jonathan George—dear sainted brother—just as he had at the meeting to which he (the speaker) had referred, there

were some people who wanted to keep the eagle in a very small cage; but he said it was no use doing that—the eagle would either break his wings or break the cage. Well, they rejoiced that night that it was not the wings of the eagle which had been broken, but the cage; and they now saw the noble bird careening through the firmament in the shining light of the sun of righteousness! He looked upon his brother Spurgeon as one who upheld the sovereignty of God, and who, on the other hand, declared the responsibility of man. He preached that never could the sinner repent without the aid of the Holy Spirit, and yet he called upon every sinner to repent and believe the gospel. Especially did his brother make prominent the grand doctrine of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and the kindred doctrine of justification by faith in the righteousness of the Lord and Savior; he took it that the central object which would be exhibited by his brother in that place would be the cross and nothing but the cross. The central object would not be the roll of the eternal decrees, not the tables of the moral law, not the laver of baptism, not the throne of judgment—the central object would be the cross of the Redeemer! Right and left they would find the roll of the eternal decrees, the tables of the law of God, the laver of baptism, and the judgment throne, but the CROSS of Jesus would stand in the midst, shedding its pure and harmonizing light over all besides. There was many a building in the Established Church of this land where they might enter, and they would hear as clear an exposition of gospel truth as they would from Mr. Spurgeon, but in many another building of the Established Church, all was priestly power, and sacramental efficacy. In many another, all that was preached was reason, intuition, and the wisdom of man—not of God. And yet all those men had subscribed to the same articles; all those men belonged to the same church. Come within this building, whenever they might, he believed they

would hear nothing of sacramental efficacy on the one side, or of man's reason or intuition on the other; but their dear brother would say that he had determined not to know anything among them but Christ, and Him crucified.

One word more and he had done. They were living in the days of "Essays and Reviews"—living in the days of a Rationalism, which, for his own part, he considered far more unscriptural than any Romanism. He wished to explain himself; he meant to say for himself that he would rather be a poor humbleminded member of the Church of Rome, believing too much, than he would be one of those modern philosophers, too wise to believe anything at all! With this modern philosophy he had no patience! The Bible, according to those men, was an old-fashioned book which had its value 2,000 years ago, but now its value was diminished by all the length of those 2,000 years. They had now outshot the Bible, said these men—they had got ahead of the Bible! They were now more intelligent and wiser than the Bible. Well, let them take it as those men said, and then he (the speaker) would add, let the venerable Book have fair play after all. If by it those men were so much wiser than they would have been, then, he said, it was only fair that they should strip themselves of all they had learned from the Bible—with regard to the attributes of God, the origin of the universe, the standard of morals, the destiny of spirits beyond the grave—and if they did that, he could fancy he saw them peeling off coat after coat, like an onion, and getting "small by degrees" but not "beautifully less," and he did not know what would remain of them. Why, in ancient Greece, there were intellects as subtle, and spirits as profound as any in modern times. He believed that on some lines of philosophical inquiry, none had been able to surpass them; but when those men entered on the doctrines of *theology*, how far did they get? Why, just as far as this, "The world by wisdom knew not God." That

was as far as they got! The youngest Sunday school child, he was going to say, knew more about God, than Socrates and Plato, and if these men knew more about God than Socrates and Plato, where did they get their knowledge, except where the little Sunday scholar got his, from the Scriptures! It was easy to stand on the mount of revelation, and then to spurn the ground upon which they stood; but let them cut that ground from under them, and down they would go into the pit of hell! There was, he continued, in ancient Athens an old cynic who went into the marketplace with his lantern kindled in the full blaze of day, and said, in the Market of Athens, "I am come to look for an honest man." And all Athens smiled at the satire. But suppose he had said, "I have come here at noon with my lantern to light up the scenery, to bring to view those grand hills, and this glorious city, and that blue sky?" Would not the cry have rung through Athens, "Diogenes is mad"? What, then, is the insanity of the men who, in the full noon-day of the gospel illumination, bring forward the little lamp of their own intuition and say, while turning their back upon the Sun of Righteousness shining in His strength, "See what our little lantern can show? See what a vast circumference it illuminates?" But oh, let that Sun but withdraw His shining, and the pall of night come down upon the scenery, and what a very twinkle would their lantern be in that abyss of darkness!

The REV. J. BIGWOOD said he could not fail to express his deep gratitude to God that He had permitted such a building as the present to be erected in which the glorious gospel in all its purity and simplicity would be preached. He had been wondering why it should be called a tabernacle—a tent—a place that was to pass away. Surely if there was a *mansion* in London, this was the one which would remain when all others had passed away! Was it not rather a temple than a tabernacle? Regarded in an ecclesiastical point of view, it was a

marvel that such a building should be built and opened *free from debt*. What was the secret? It was the faith which the pastor and church had exhibited in the mighty power and goodness of God. The minister was not alone; God was with him, and he with God; He walked with God, and relied upon His power, and God had granted him the desire of his heart. He congratulated them with his whole heart upon what they had accomplished, and he hoped that God's blessing would rest upon them, and that thousands might there be born-again to God.

The REV. J. RUSSELL congratulated Mr. Spurgeon and his friends on the completion of the Metropolitan Tabernacle at Newington. Its being erected so near the Borough made him feel a deep interest in it, for he was born in the Borough, and knew the whole neighborhood well. Close by, in former days, there stood the Fishmongers' Almshouses with their pretty gardens, and there, his beloved father used to go and speak to some of the aged inmates of the love of Christ. And he hoped the members of this church would visit the poor all around, and make known to them the glad tidings of mercy through Christ. It was called a Tabernacle, which curiously enough in its derivation meant a little wooden house—*taberna*, a wooden house, *tabernaculum*, its diminutive—but the general sense is a habitation, and its sense in Scripture, the habitation of God. They had erected a large and magnificent house, but its size, its splendor, its elegance, its beautiful columns, would avail nothing if it were not the habitation of God. But he believed it would be, and that would be its glory. He rejoiced that a place of that size had been erected. There were large theatres, large Roman Catholic chapels, why should there not be large chapels where great numbers of people might be brought together to hear the gospel? He hoped there would be others like this. They had showed great zeal and generosity; it was a coincidence

rather amazing that the poll-tax computed on the children of Israel, for the erection of the Tabernacle in the wilderness, amounted to about £35,000 and the cost of their tabernacle was not much less! It was entitled to the name of Metropolitan, for it drew its hearers from all quarters, and the results of this great effort will affect not only the metropolis, but the world. The numerous Sunday school children there instructed would grow up and carry with them to many distant parts, the good seed of the kingdom of God. He thanked God for what Mr. Spurgeon and his friends had been enabled to accomplish, and he trusted they would have the continual and abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Mr. SPURGEON said they might get their hymn books ready; but he would first give them a statement of the liabilities that had been sent up to him. They needed for the builder, £3,000; for the architect, £200; for gas, £160; for the gates and boundaries, £300; for the treasurer, £100, matting, carpets, etc., £350, for fittings, furniture, etc., about £100; which made £4,200, or thereabouts. These calculations were made so that they would meet all demands; but the pledge he made to the public was that they should enter that place free of debt and that would be accomplished when rather more than £3,000 had been paid in, for the other matters could wait awhile, and would not be undertaken until the funds were in hand to warrant their being done. He read additional lists of contributions received from various sources, and gave the following abstract of the whole—he had brought in over £1,500; his wife and her lady friends, £1,200; the people that night, about £771 and clear proceeds of the lecture by Mr. Layard, £100. The collection on the previous day amounted to rather more than £120, making a total of £3,700. Mr. Spurgeon then called upon the whole assembly to sing the Doxology; the congregation immediately rose and sang with great fervor those words of praise to the

God of Heaven, and repeated them with enthusiasm at the request of the rejoicing pastor.

The REV. C. STOVEL was then called upon. They had maintained, he said, their operations with a constant living zeal, and he wished them to receive the affectionate assurance of his joy in their success. Yet, he could not join in any flattery that could lead them from the point where zeal, care and discretion would be required. Not a little would it require of personal effort, and of wisdom to maintain the institutions in this place in due order and in effective operation; not a little would be required of patient reliance upon God before the agencies committed to their trust should have been brought out for use. They must become learners at the feet of Jesus, and while they kept the cross in the center, as Mr. Tucker had reminded them, and promised in their behalf, they were to remember that above that cross—the cross never to be forgotten—there would be a living Savior before whom they must all bow. Reference had been made to some of the features of their own time. He wished not himself to enter the Establishment and define its various features. He had read the book, or nearly the whole of it, to which reference had been made. He besought them not to turn to that book to awaken a theological odium about it; but to study practically in the testing house of daily life, the points which it threw out into public light. His impression was that there was more to be dealt with than at first sight might be suspected, and they might be assured, that in the present time they stood in a position where the willingness of a learner was much required to bring the truth of heaven home to the direction of our present affairs. If they would take his advice—he presented it only for what it was worth—it was that they should entangle themselves as little as possible with the theories of the past, or with the speculations of the present—but to keep themselves in thought, in heart, and in action, free to

follow the commandments of Him who lived and ruled forever. For his part, he could not help thinking that the personality of our Christianity was precisely the point on which their thoughts should always rest. The reverend gentleman enlarged upon this topic, and concluded by assuring the meeting that they had the most tender and sincerest desires of his heart for their spiritual welfare.

Mr. SPURGEON then stated that while the last speaker had been addressing them, Sir Henry Havelock had been compelled by his camp duties to retire, and Mr. Moore of the eminent firm of Copestake and Moore had occupied the chair at his request. He should, by the chairman's leave, depart from the ordinary rules of public meetings, by putting two or three motions to them. The first was that their hearty and sincere thanks should be tendered to Sir Henry Havelock for presiding over them, coupled with their kindest wishes, and earnest prayers for his esteemed mother, Lady Havelock, and the whole family. The motion was carried by acclamation.

Mr. SPURGEON then proposed a vote of thanks to the architect, and the builder for their joint skill and generosity. The builder, he was happy to tell them, had become a deacon of the church; and in referring to the architect, he remarked that the chapel would be a model for others, whether large or small. The motion was carried in the midst of loud applause.

Mr. POCOCK, the architect, and **Mr. HIGGS**, the builder, both returned thanks and were warmly applauded.

Mr. SPURGEON said he wished them to signify their hearty recognition of the splendid Christian generosity of which they had been partakers by proposing a vote of thanks to the contributors to that magnificent building. The motion was carried by acclamation.

Mr. SPURGEON: Now, my friends, I would ask you tonight to offer one more prayer for me than you have offered

before. What am I to do with such a work as this upon me? It is not the getting up of this building; it is not the launching of the vessel—it is keeping her afloat! Who is sufficient for these things? How shall I, a young man, a feeble child, go in and out before this people? Blessed be God, there is a glorious answer to this question! “*My strength is sufficient for you; My strength shall be made perfect in your weakness.*” That arm, which has upheld us up to now, shows no sign of palsy! Those eyes which have smiled upon us until now, have not grown dim. The promise has not failed! We have had this day another pledge of His faithfulness, and another foretaste of His future goodness. In the name of the Lord would I set up my banner tonight. He has been Jehovah-Jireh here; now, tonight, we would call this place Jehovah-Nissi—for here has the Lord’s banner been displayed! But, brothers and sisters, as to the future we must ask for the blessing, or we shall not have it. If you ever prayed for me before, pray for me tonight! Oh, my dear brothers and sisters, upon whose hearts I have been borne so long—you who have listened to me so patiently, and have sometimes had your souls comforted, do not forget me! Of all men the most *pitiable*, if you take away your prayers, and if, in consequences, God take away His Spirit—of all men the most *happy*, if you will bear me in your arms; if the Lord shall still be my strength and my shield! More than I have done to advance His gospel, I cannot promise to do, for God knows I have preached beyond my strength, and worked and toiled as much as one frame could do. But I hope that, in answer to your prayers, I may become more prayerful, more faithful, and have more power to wrestle with God for man, and more energy to wrestle with man for God. I pray you, as though I asked it of you for my very life, do this night commend me to God! If you have ever been edified, encouraged, or comforted through me, I beseech you carry me before God. And especially you who are my spiritual

sons and daughters, begotten of me by the power of the Holy Spirit—you who have been reclaimed from sin; you who were wanderers in the wild waste until Jesus met with you in the Music Hall, in Exeter Hall, or in Park Street—you, above all—you *must* pray for me! Oh, God, we pray You, let multitudes of the vilest of the vile here be saved! I had rather die this night, on this spot, and end my career than lose your prayers. You aged members, deacons and elders; will you not be more earnest than ever? My younger brothers and sisters, my co-equals in age, comrades in battle, you, young men, and women, who are strong to overcome the wicked one, stand up with me, shoulder to shoulder, and give me your help! Let no strife and no division creep in among us! Let no vainglory mar our deeds! Let nothing be done which could drive away the sacred dove, and rob us of the presence of the Holy Spirit! Brothers and sisters, pray for us, in the name of the entire ministry, I say, pray brethren, pray for *us*! I think the ministers here would rise as one man, and say with me, standing as I do in the most perilous of positions, “Brethren pray for *me*.” For oh, if I fall, what dishonor to the Holy Church at large? If your pastor sins, what shame! If this Church becomes a failure, what dishonor! Great God, we lay hold upon Your promise tonight! We prayed last Sabbath evening, “If Your spirit go not with us, carry us not up hence.” And now we grasp the promise, and by faith would we believe in its fulfillment—“My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest.”

Mr. SPURGEON concluded by proposing a vote of thanks to Mr. Moore, who occupied the chair; and it was also carried by acclamation.

Mr. MOORE, in returning thanks, said he had never seen a sight so thoroughly charming as the one before him. Speaking in sober earnest, and as a Churchman, he must say that this was a magnificent sight. Mr. Spurgeon had done the Church of

England better than any clergyman in it, in his opinion. He had watched his career ever since he came to London, when he was supposed to be not quite as sane as he was now. He had listened to his sermons, and he had considered his success a miracle. He believed that Mr. Spurgeon was a miracle raised up by Almighty God to advance His kingdom. He had had something to do with selling that plot of land, as he was one of the Fishmongers' Company, and he must say that he had been astonished how they had raised the money. It would have taken churchmen 10 years! It was a thing almost unexampled in the Christian church! There was no one who sympathized with them more than he did, and he believed that that Church would be instrumental in bringing many to Christ. He would just say one thing further in reference to the miraculous influence which the preaching of Mr. Spurgeon had had on the Christian world. He had said a hundred times, that they would never have had St. Paul's, nor Westminster Abbey, nor the Theatres opened for Sunday preaching if it had not been for such influence. He hoped Mr. Spurgeon's appeal for their prayers would be listened to, and he prayed God, himself, that their minister might never be left to disgrace the position in which he was placed.

Mr. SPURGEON then pronounced the benediction, and the proceeding closed with the Doxology.

372 MEETING OF THE NEIGHBORING CHURCHES

**Wednesday Evening, March 27th, 1861,
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

THE INVITATION to the ministers and members of neighboring churches, to show their support in the opening of the new Tabernacle, by attending especially at a meeting held this evening, was most cordially accepted, and the number present proved the heartiness of the response. An audience approaching 4,000 in number assembled on the occasion; while on the platform and pulpit were a goodly array of ministerial brothers.

The CHAIR was occupied by the **Rev. Dr. STEANE**.

The fourth hymn, given out by **Mr. SPURGEON**, and described as a hymn of welcome and fellowship, was first sung.

The Rev. WILLIAM ROBINSON, of York Road Chapel, offered prayer.

The CHAIRMAN, in opening the proceedings, said two days ago that magnificent edifice for the first time resounded with the proclamation of the gospel, and its lofty dome thrilled with the notes of prayer and praise. Then, with an appropriate and becoming solemnity, it was consecrated and set apart to the worship of Jehovah, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the God of our salvation. He had not the privilege of being present on that occasion, but then, as now, he most affectionately and cordially sympathized with his Christian brother who was henceforth to minister there in the gospel of Jesus Christ. He said that by Rev. Spurgeon's godly zeal, and

untiring diligence, sustained by the whole Christian public, the magnificent structure had been reared; and now, the pastors, the deacons, and the members of the neighboring churches, without regard to denomination, without distinction of name, without reference to varieties of judgment, and opinion, had been by him, and his friends, invited to gather together in that great concourse. That invitation had been accepted with the deep affectionate Christian sincerity with which they believed it to have been given; and they were there to offer to Mr. Spurgeon, and to the church over which he presided, their affectionate congratulations. As they surveyed that splendid structure—the largest sanctuary which had ever been reared by such churches as theirs to the service and glory of God—they were filled with adoring reverence and gratitude, and exclaimed, “What has God worked!” He wished on that occasion to be commissioned by the meeting to assure Mr. Spurgeon, and the church itself of the entire cordiality, of the affectionate respect, of the brotherly love with which the sister churches in the neighborhood regarded them all. He did not want that expression to be the individual expression of his own heart, but of the hearts of the pastors and members of the churches present. Perhaps he should proceed in a novel and unexpected way, but he should ask if his brothers, the pastors of the churches, would entrust him with the commission to communicate their congratulations and affectionate love, to signify it by rising. (*Here the ministers rose at once*). If the meeting would commission him to tell Mr. Spurgeon how much they loved him, and how devoutly and unanimously they wished him, “God speed,” they would signify that by rising. (*Everyone in the building at once rose*).

Nothing could have been more prompt, more unanimous and more delightful, and he now begged to offer to Mr. Spurgeon the right hand of brotherly fellowship. (*This was done*

in the heartiest manner). He had no intention, when he entered the building, of proceeding in the manner that he had done. But was it not a good, a wise and happy suggestion? He trusted that his dear brother would live to be the pastor of that church for a far longer period than any of the brothers present had ministered in their respective churches; long might he live with God's blessing to labor there! He devoutly desired to thank the providence of God which had brought Mr. Spurgeon among them. That providence might have brought a brother who would have been an element of strife and discord—but God's grace had brought a *brother* among them, with whom they were one in feeling, one in doctrine, one in heart, one in sympathy, and one in Christ. There were present the representatives of many Churches, yet they were one Church—a part of the general assembly and church of the first-born. They were not two churches, if they spoke of the church of the redeemed in heaven, and the church of the blood-bought on earth; they were not two churches, but one body of which Christ was the ever-living and glorified head! He trusted, through the grace of the Lord Jesus pervading all members of that one body, they would henceforth be still more united than in past time they had been, and exhibit that unity in the face of a scoffing, infidel, and ungodly world. He trusted they would spend a happy evening, the recollection of which would never be erased from their memories, and when, in that upper and better sanctuary, the true Tabernacle, not made with hands like this, through the infinite riches of divine mercy, they would be worshippers together, it might be among the sweetest and hallowed reminiscences of their life on earth, that on the present occasion they were gathered together a united assembly of brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Mr. SPURGEON did not know what he could say in answer to the affectionate expressions of his brothers. They

would excuse him if he did not attempt to express his gratitude on his own account, for his heart was too full. It had been singularly his lot to be placed in a position where he had the kindest brothers for neighbors that ever gathered round any man. It was not easy for people to love *him*, for he sometimes said very strong things; when he meant to say a thing that should take effect, he felt that he ought to say it in a strong manner in an age like this, so shallow and so careless. Yet he had the love and esteem of his brothers far more than if he had attempted to speak smoothly. He believed he was everybody's debtor; he did not know that anybody owed him anything, but he owed something to everybody; for all his friends had kindly helped in the present effort. While his Church had to do the most, yet there had hardly been a place from which they had not received some aid. He could scarcely look round London upon any Church of Christ where he could not find some dear brother who had taken as large an interest in the work as themselves. He could only say on behalf of his own Church, that they were heartily at one with all Churches of our Lord Jesus Christ who held their common faith in that neighborhood, and he hoped in the future they would have better opportunities of testing their willingness to assist all efforts carried on by their Brethren. Next week there was to be a meeting, called a meeting of denominations, which would be addressed by members of all denominations upon the Scriptural Unity of the Church. They, as a Church, had ever been distinctly Baptists, but he hoped it would be their pleasure yet more and more in the future to bear upon their banner the motto of, "Union in Christ," which was the true light in which to see the union of all the saints. He hoped they should have meetings for fellowship, and mutual encouragement at least every quarter, and thus the pastors of the district would become

more intimate and more cordial, by joining their prayers, and by mingling their efforts.

The Rev. WM. HOWIESON, of Walworth, said he had come there that evening to bid his brother Spurgeon, “God speed,” in his new and enlarged sphere of labor. He believed he was his nearest ministerial neighbor, and if his coming to Newington should affect the attendance at other places of worship in the neighborhood, he (Mr. Howieson) would be very likely to suffer himself! Still, whatever might be the consequences to him in that respect, he did most heartily welcome Mr. Spurgeon to Newington, and he prayed that his most optimistic expectations as to the success of his ministry might be more than realized. A short time after the site for the building had been secured; he had some conversation with a Baptist minister from the West of England, respecting it. He was asked, “What do you and the other ministers in the neighborhood of the Elephant and Castle mean to do; now that Mr. Spurgeon’s tabernacle is to be built there?” He did not understand the question. “Well,” said the gentleman, “you will find brother Spurgeon a very potent neighbor, and if you do not do something, you will find you will not hold your own.” He wanted to know what they were to do, and asked his friend what he had to suggest. The reply was—“You must do as they were accustomed to do in the old coaching days. When a new opposition coach had been put upon the road, the people connected with the old evangelist said one to another, ‘If we mean to stand our ground, we must horse the old coach better.’ So, he said, you and your brothers must preach better—*horse the coach better*.” He trusted that this would be one of the effects of Mr. Spurgeon’s coming there—that they should all preach better! There was, no doubt, much room for improvement; and perhaps that improvement was needed more in the *spiritual* than in the intellectual qualifications for their work. The Chairman

had been nearly 40 years a pastor of the same church, and he was sure he could not have been so long a pastor without having become acquainted with the peculiar temptations to which they as ministers were exposed. He knew they were in danger of neglecting their own hearts, while they were professedly taking care of the souls of others; he knew that they were tempted to substitute a critical study of the Scriptures, as ministers, for a devout and daily perusal of them as Christians; that they were apt to perform or discharge the duties of their office in a professional sort of way, instead of feeling themselves the power of those truths which they declare to others; that they were in danger of resting satisfied with a fervor and elevation of soul in public, instead of a calm and holy communion with God in private. He said if they gave way to those things, then as the result of diminished spirituality, there would be a barren ministry, for it was only as they were living near to God, themselves, that they could be the means of blessing to others—it was only by feeding on His truth, themselves, that it became spirit and life to those who heard it—it was only as they were living and preaching in the spirit of prayer, that the weapons of their warfare were mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds! Happy then would it be for them as ministers, and happy for their respective churches, if the coming of Mr. Spurgeon to Newington should drive them all to their knees in prayer, and should lead them to cry mightily to God for the help of His Spirit, and should impress upon their minds more than it had ever been—that a minister's life was the life of his ministry! But he demurred to one representation of his West of England friend, for this was not an *opposition* coach! It was doubtless opposed to something, for it was opposed to Satan and all his works, but it was not opposed to him, nor to his church, nor to any minister in that neighborhood who preached Christ and Him crucified. What

was his brother Spurgeon's objective in the building of that large place of worship? Was it merely to gather around him a large and influential congregation? Was it merely that he might be admired and applauded? Was it that he might commend the gospel to the tastes, rather than the consciences of his hearers? Oh, no! It was that he might not cease to teach and preach in that place, Jesus Christ, and that a great number might believe and turn unto the Lord! Then their hearts, their Master, and their success were one! There were "diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit." There were "differences of administration, but the same Lord." There were "diversities of operations, but it was the same God which worked in all." When, therefore, he looked round upon that beautiful structure, and tried to imagine its future history, he could not but rejoice to think of what would take place within its walls. *There*, hearts would be broken by the power of God's Spirit, and then healed again by the restoring power of Christ's precious blood! *There*, multitudes of conversions would be worked by regenerating grace, and then these multitudes trained up for glory! *There*, backsliders would be reclaimed, mourners comforted, believers established! *There*, there would be many triumphs of faith over temptation, of love over selfishness, and of hope over the fear of death! *There*, there would be workings of devout emotion—now sinking down in the dust of penitence, now soaring to heaven in praise—sometimes earnestly wrestling in supplication, and sometimes pouring forth the strains of adoring gratitude; one hour weeping before the Savior's cross, another exulting before the Savior's throne! Oh, when he thought of the probable history of that magnificent place of worship, he was compelled as a Christian to pray, "The Lord God of your fathers make you a thousand times as many more as you are, and bless you as He has promised."

The Rev. PAUL TURQUAND said he was the nearest independent minister to Mr. Spurgeon, and perhaps the first of that denomination who had spoken in that place of worship. He did not wish to bring them before him as a Christian Church, and utter the language of flattery, nor did he wish to stand before the minister of that noble place of worship, and swing the censer of adulation, and cover him with that perfume. But he would like to utter the language of heartfelt praise. The minister and the congregation had done well, nobly, magnificently, triumphantly, and he did not think he was praising them unduly when he gave expression to those words. They had taught others by the success which had crowned their efforts, that they ought to hope for nobler things, and dare greater things than they had up to now done; they had proved there was a latent power in the Christian Church which only needed circumstances to fully evoke it; their friends had shown them, when the Christian Church had a good purpose before it, resolution to accomplish it, and faith in God to accomplish it, that their work would be sure to be crowned with success! He was exceedingly glad that this admirable edifice had received the name of “Tabernacle.” It was a word which carried them back to the structure erected in the wilderness; it told them of the bronze altar on which the substitutionary victim was laid; it brought before them the bronze laver in which the water typifying the influence of the Holy Spirit was held, and as his brother, Mr. Howieson, had said, just as it was *there* so should it be *here*—that God’s work and power should be greatly manifested! His prayer for them and their minister was, “Clothe Your ministers with the garments of salvation, abundantly bless the provision of Your house, satisfy Your poor with bread, so we, Your people, will give You thanks, and show forth Your praise from day to day.” He was very glad the Tabernacle had been placed in the midst of *London*. Some country brother told

him that it would be a good thing if it had been placed in Pekin or St. Petersburg. He himself would not have been sorry if it had been built in Paris, or better still, in Rome! What would the Pope have thought of it? If he had been consulted, he would perhaps have recommended that it should be erected on the other side of the water. As, however, it was in Newington, he would say it was in a very good place indeed. He was glad that it was placed in the middle of *London*, for there was no city in the world that had so much influence as London, and if they acted upon London, they acted upon the whole world! He was pleased to think that the Tabernacle was in his own neighborhood, but still, some prophets of evil put the question, how would it act upon their churches? It might perhaps cause some vacant seats—perhaps some members of their churches might leave. Well, there was no garden but what needed occasionally to be weeded—and they might depend upon it—the garden of the Lord occasionally needed weeding! “What is a weed?” was asked of a celebrated botanist. And he said, “A weed is a flower out of its right place,” and Mr. Spurgeon very likely would take some of those weeds, and by planting them in their *right* places, cause them to become flowers in the garden of the Lord! He had a powerful and eloquent voice, and was well able to awaken the indifferent, and to make those who were careless and unconcerned, thoughtful with regard to their souls. If there had been one burden upon his (Mr. Turquand’s) spirit, it was this—that in that neighborhood, indifference seemed to have gathered like a cloud on the people. He did not think they were more immoral than in other parts of London, but he did think they were more indifferent. If, however, they would come to hear Mr. Spurgeon, they might be led to go and hear others, and he hoped a *spirit of hearing* would be diffused among them! Why, in such a case, when the congregations grew larger, the preacher would grow more eloquent, and possibly

the Paul of York Street might become an Apollos! At any rate, when a noble boat was stranded, and men were perishing, it was a high crime to quarrel about the manning of the life boat! Let us hasten to the rescue and be as willing to take the oar as to stand at the helm! As the representative of his congregation, he could say they had always had a friendly spirit towards Mr. Spurgeon, and had done something to help him. They had but one objective in view—the conversion of souls, and the glory of their Master. When an army stood in formation before the foe, they did not regret that some general, great in battle, was coming to their help, and should they not rejoice that another had come to assist them in the tremendous struggle, whose watchword was—“to the help of the Lord against the mighty”?

A hymn was here sung, after which the **CHAIRMAN** introduced the **Rev. George Rogers** as the gentleman who had the educational superintendence of the young men, who were in training for the ministry, under Mr. Spurgeon.

The Rev. GEORGE ROGERS, after speaking in terms of congratulation, said he had been told the building was an extravagant affair—a nine-day wonder—and that before many months had passed, it would be converted into a penny theater. A man's prophecy was often the intimation of his desire. The wish was father to the thought. Such a remark might apply, if it had been a simple speculation, erected for an untried objective. But he believed it to be the result of a gradual and solid growth. A giant infancy, and a giant youth required a habitation of its own when it came to manhood. He felt, and all must feel, that that magnificent structure had been raised as a public homage to the doctrines which Mr. Spurgeon preached, and to the earnest manner in which he had proclaimed them. This house was built, not for him, but for the God whom he serves; not for him, but for the Savior whom he loves; not for him, but for the Spirit on which he relies; not for him, but for

the Church over which he presides; not for him, but for the souls by which he is encompassed. It was a noble memorial of the unseen realities of the faith of the gospel. To every passer-by it would be a witness that the Tabernacle of God was with man, and that He would dwell among them. To every eye it would tell of the liberty, and the independence which Protestant dissenters could claim in this land, and of the readiness of the Christian public to support doctrines of such a nature, when earnestly preached! Some ascribed it to the infatuation of the people. Why, Englishmen were not such fools as to give their money away without consideration, and without an approval of the object! Some time ago, in a continental city, the priest of a certain cathedral got up a subscription for a golden crown to be put on the head of the Virgin. A solemn festival was held on the occasion of the coronation, at which the king and his courtiers were present; but one man retired from the scene to weep, and when asked why he wept, said, "They put a golden crown upon the Virgin, but there is no crown for the infant Jesus." But here, what they had done had been to put a crown upon the head of Christ, and as they would often sing in that place, to "Crown Him Lord of all." The building gave the lie to those who said the doctrines of grace were harmful to good works. Their friend Mr. Spurgeon preached all the doctrines of grace. Election, particular redemption, came from his lips in trumpet tones. He saw the love of Christ to His Church, and of the Church to Christ overflowing in sweet nectar in the Song of Solomon. Some said those doctrines were destructive of all good works—that people who listened to such doctrines did nothing—his answer to these objectors was, let them look at this building! Election would never have built it, except by seeking to make their calling and election sure. Particular Redemption would never have built it without the particular love which it was

calculated to inspire. The doctrine of perseverance would never have built it without the *act* of perseverance. Faith would never have built it without works. One of his students, who came late one morning, said his clock did not go right. He replied to him it was an antinomian clock—it was without good works! The creed of Mr. Spurgeon was not antinomian, and that building was a witness to it! Nor would works without faith have built it. No tree could grow without being well watered at the roots; and if they wished this tree of theirs to grow and bear much fruit, they must bring down the rains and dew of heaven by their prayers. Why were they, the neighboring ministers and Churches there, but to show that the objective was not to set up altar against altar? It was to publish the same doctrine! The God whom we all honor is to be honored in this place! The Savior whom we love is to be exalted in this place! The gospel which we love is to be preached here! The atonement on which we rest our hope is to be the open fountain here for sin, and for uncleanness! He, therefore, felt an interest in the building, and all his brothers in the ministry must have a common interest in it. Although one star might differ from another star in glory, it was their combined rays that guided the pilgrim on the desert, and the mariner upon the wave. They had done a good work, and had worked long and hard, and unitedly. What was next to be done? They had now no more to do with begging, with bricks and mortar, and with bazaars. Let them turn all their energies into spiritual channels; let the hands that had been stretched out to labor, be lifted up in prayer; let the feet that had borne them to the houses of the rich to collect gold, now carry them to the habitations of the poor to give them that consolation whose price was far above rubies! Having such a start, great things were expected from them. The eyes of the Church, and of the world were upon them. There was much grace needed, and it was to be had with faith and

prayer. He came to that meeting from the bed of an aged lady, and when he told her he was coming to Mr. Spurgeon's Tabernacle she said, "May it be a house in which thousands shall be turned to God." That was his wish, and he was sure it was the wish of them all.

The CHAIRMAN called upon the Rev. Mr. BETTS, of Peckham, whom he introduced as the successor of the well-known Dr. Collier.

The Rev. R. W. BETTS said, like William Jay of Bath, he was not born under the platform dispensation, but when he received the hearty letter from his brother, Mr. Spurgeon, asking him as a neighboring minister to come and give them a few words of greeting upon taking possession of that magnificent edifice, he felt it altogether impossible for him to refrain, and therefore he had come as a neighboring minister to bid them welcome and God speed. He was perfectly astonished at that beautiful and that magnificent structure. After some remarks upon the name of the building, he proceeded. As he was coming from Westminster the other evening on an omnibus, there were two large buildings which he passed, and he could not help remarking the contrast presented by the outward aspects of those buildings. The one was St. George's Cathedral; the other was the "Metropolitan Tabernacle." The one was dimly lighted, with a group of some dozen miserable people standing outside the gate, and the whole thing seemed enshrined in gloom. But in the Tabernacle, the light was brilliantly streaming from the windows, and the whole place seemed full of life and vigor. If he had been a stranger in London, he would not have needed anyone to tell him the difference of those buildings—the one all darkness, the other all light; the one full of the light of Christianity, the other a hollow empty sepulcher of rites and ceremonies. In the one, the living personal Christ, preached as the power of God unto

salvation to everyone who believes; in the other His glory eclipsed by rites and ceremonies, and all taken away that is vital and essential in the gospel of our Lord and Savior. There was another thing that struck him about those two buildings—the incompleteness of the one, and the beautiful perfection of the other. The spire of the one structure—where was it? It was nowhere! Although so many years had elapsed since that structure was commenced, yet the faithful did not seem to be ready with their offerings; the necessary was not exactly forthcoming. What was the case with the Tabernacle? Within a year or two the magnificent sum of £30,000 had been subscribed for its erection. He looked upon that as a token of the earnest Protestantism of our Savior—of the love of the people of England for the simple gospel of our Lord and Savior. He supposed that the spire of St. George's Cathedral would one day be completed, but whether completed or not, Roman Catholicism as a system must fall; it was founded in the sands of human tradition and priestly ordinances; and when the waves of our gospel salvation, and the winds of divine truth shall have beaten upon it a little more, it will fall, and great will be the fall of it—and God speed that day! But he did not come to tell them that; he came there simply as a neighboring minister to bid Mr. Spurgeon and his friends a hearty welcome, and God speed to that locality. He did so because they came in his Master's name. In conclusion, he urged them, as there only remained £500 to completely finish the edifice, to see if they could subscribe it that night, and then in future the meetings would be free.

“All hail the power of Jesus' name,” was then sung.

The Rev. NEWMAN HALL congratulated the congregation and the pastor upon the successful termination of their arduous labors, and upon their being able to meet in a building free from debt—a building not raised by taxes wrung

from the community at large, willing or unwilling, but a structure raised by the free-will offerings of God's people—of those who, recognizing the spiritual gifts with which God had endowed their friend, and were desirous that a building should be reared capable of holding as many thousands as could be conveniently reached by his rich voice. He need not say to them, what, no doubt, they were saying to themselves, "Be not high-minded on account of what you see." He knew they felt it to be a matter, not of pride, but of deep humble gratitude to God, who condescended to permit unworthy sinners in any way to be engaged in advancing the interests of His kingdom. He knew their earnest prayer was that the old words might be continually verified—"What house will you build for Me? I dwell in the high and holy place, but with this man will I dwell, who is of an humble and contrite spirit and who trembles at My word." For some time, Surrey Chapel had been the largest Christian sanctuary south of the Thames. He hoped there was not a worthy member of Surrey Chapel who did not rejoice that there was a sanctuary raised more than twice as large! And even should it lead to a decrease of the number of worshippers at Surrey Chapel, yet, if on the whole, the cause of God were more advanced, it would be their duty and their pleasure to say—"Herein do I rejoice, yes and will rejoice." Envy, jealousy, pity everywhere, were monstrous in connection with the work of God. What? Regret if others are doing more than we are? Regret that others are more useful than we? Is it not all one business—one interest? Are not all things ours? Whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas—all are ours! We are rowing the same boat against the strong tide—each of us doing our best. Shall I regret if others in the crew with stronger arms, and more vigorous strokes, are helping to send the boat more strongly against the tide, and bringing it more quickly into port? Our house is on fire, we are bringing water to extinguish the

flames—shall I be sorry if my brother can handle a larger bucket, and throw a greater volume of water upon the flames? We are engaged in one grand warfare, and if we are, each of us, standing in the place our Captain has bid us occupy, and fighting bravely for Him, shall we regret it if others are more advanced in the fight, and with heavier blows, and surer aim are making greater havoc among the enemy? It might sound irregular, but it was most true, in great enterprises every man must do his best to excel his brethren, and when he had done his best, he must rejoice that many of his brethren excelled him! They might excel Surrey Chapel in the size of the building, and in the number of the congregation, but they did not and could not be expected to excel it in the machinery they employed for evangelization. This was the work of his revered predecessors, Rowland Hill and James Sherman, and therefore he could refer to it without any supposition of arrogance or boasting. In connection with Surrey Chapel, they had 18 Sunday evening services conducted by members of the congregation in various courts and lanes in the district—five evangelists were maintained to go about and instruct the poor, and comfort the sorrowful. They had 12 Sunday schools with 4,500 children, and 400 teachers—four week-day schools, three sets of secular lectures going on, week by week, in different parts, for the benefit of the working classes. They had benevolent societies distributing about £400 a year in addition to the money collected at the sacrament for poor members, and they had the Temperance Society helping all. He sincerely hoped the time was not far distant when they would exceed Surrey Chapel in all these instrumentalities and labors; when they would have 36 Sunday evening services, ten evangelists, 24 schools with their 9,000 children, and 800 teachers, eight week-day schools, and half a dozen sets of lectures; and he trusted that this sanctuary would soon be opened for the advocacy of the glorious

temperance principle, which had rescued so many from vice and ruin. Let them always bear in mind what a Church was. It was not an institution the members of which had nothing to do but to come on Sunday, and hear comfortable sermons, and go home and discuss them, weigh the doctrines in them, and criticize the preacher. He knew their minister would be the last to encourage them in a namby-pamby sort of religion of that kind! No, the churches were to be arsenals where the weapons of love were stored with which they were to attack the enemy round about—grand depositories of Christian enterprise; a glorious propaganda, every member a member of the society of Jesus—not leaving it to the pastor to be the only evangelist, but every man saying to his neighbor, “Know you the Lord God.”

What an interesting sight was the opening of a new sanctuary! How one’s thoughts looked forward! What important events would take place in this sanctuary in the course of years—events that might not be chronicled in the history of this world, but in which angels would take the very deepest interest! Here the people of God, worn and jaded by the toils and cares of life, will come to be refreshed with the heavenly manna, and the invigorating streams of the river of life. Here the sorrowful and downcast will feel their burdens lightened, and be able to say to an old Yorkshire working man, a friend of mine, “Ah, it is blessed work, cross-bearing, when it’s tied on with love!” Here those who come tormented with doubts and fears will see the clouds dispersed, and feel their anxieties removed. Here the tempted, carried down headlong by the tide of peril, will see the hand of love stretched out, and grasping it by the hand of faith, will be drawn up unto the firm land of salvation! Here souls dead in trespasses and sins will hear the voice of Jesus, “Come forth!” There will be many a cry, “What must I do to be saved?” There will be many a prayer

heard, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy upon me!” Here the saints of God will be trained for a better sanctuary. Angels will often hover over this spot and carry up the glad tidings, “Behold, he prays!” I seem to see the ladder that Jacob beheld let down from heaven—angels are coming up and down, blessings are descending, and prayers and praise are ascending; and Jesus the Redeemer is above, seated at the right hand of power, making all-prevalent intercession for His people. Oh, may this be the consecration that shall hallow this Tabernacle! Never may *Ichabod* be written on these walls! Never may there cease to be preached here, and loved here, the pure, the simple, the all-glorious gospel of the grace of God—the grace of God revealed to all transgressors! The size of the building seems to me in glorious harmony with the glorious character of the redemption that we preach. It seems impossible to speak of a straitened and limited theology in a spacious building so vast as this. No, as Dr. Chalmers says, “In the commission we have received to preach the gospel to every creature, there is no frozen limitation, but a munificence of mercy, boundless as space, free and open as the expanse of the firmament.” I am persuaded that never will there be so great a multitude gathered together here that your minister will hesitate to proclaim a Christ for every man, declaring that all who believe shall be saved, and that none shall be lost except those to whom it is said, “You will not come unto Me that you might have life!” Christ—Christ crucified, the only foundation of the sinner’s hope, the only secret of the believers’ life and joy! This, my friends, is the true safeguard of the Church. “Here,” as old Oliver Cromwell says in one of his letters, “here would I rest, and here only.”

It is not our sect, however we may prefer it—Episcopacy, or Independency, or Presbyterianism, or Methodism. It is not the having a Liturgy, or the having free prayer; it is not a

gorgeous ceremony, and it is not a Scriptural simplicity; it is not much water or little water—it is not the adult immersion or the infant sprinkling—no, it is Jesus exhibited in the pulpit, honored in the worship, manifested in the lives of all the people that is the glory of the Church—and without that there is no glory! It is not the splendor of architecture, or your glorious portico, and majestic columns—not this graceful roof, and these airy galleries, and these spacious seats so admirably arranged for worship and for hearing. It is not the towering dome, or the tapering spire emulating the skies. It is not clustering columns and intersecting arches through which a dim religious light may wander—it is not all these—though I do not despise the beauties of architecture—which is the glory of the Church. Nor is it the splendor of the pew, though wealth, and fashion, and learning may be there, and overflowing numbers crowd the sanctuary. It is not the splendor of the pulpit—the eloquence that can wave its magic wand over a delighted audience till every eye glistens, and every heart beats with emotion—the erudition that from varied stores of learning can cull its illustrations to adorn the theme—the novelty of thought and sentence, and argument that can captivate the intellect and satisfy the reason—the fancy that can interweave with the discourse the fascinations of poetry, and the beauties of style. No, it is not any one of these, or all of these together! It is Christ in His real and glorious divinity; Christ in His true and proper humanity; Christ in the all and sole sufficiency of His atonement; Christ in His in-dwelling Spirit, and all-prevailing intercession. This is the glory! And without this, though we had all other things, *Ichabod* must be written on the walls of any church. This is the true ark before which alone Dagon falls prostrate. This it is that gives us a glory greater than that which the temple of Solomon ever possessed. For here we have the living manna upon which we may feed.

Here we have the true mercy seat. Here we have the real sacrifice—He who takes away the sins of the world! Here we have constant miracles. What? Will they tell us there are no such things as miracles possible? There are miracles—actual, glorious miracles taking place continually, verifying the truth of our Christian system. The eyes of the blind are still being opened! The ears of the deaf are still being unstopped! And the lame man still leaps as a hart, and the dead man sepulchered in his sin comes forth to live a life of holy obedience and grateful love! Because I know this gospel of Christ crucified is preached, and will be preached and manifested here, therefore I say there is no enchantment against Israel; there is no divination against Jacob. “How goodly are your tents, O Israel, and your tabernacles, O Jacob.” Peace be within these walls, and prosperity within these palaces. For my brother and companion’s sake we all of us now say, “Peace be with you.”

Mr. SPURGEON proposed a vote of thanks to the chairman, and to the various ministers, observing that large as the place was, and preaching as he did a great redemption, yet every pillar was made of iron, firmly fixed and immovable, and he hoped to preach a sure, settled covenant gospel, and not a frail and failing one. The thanks were carried by acclamation.

The Doxology was sung, and the meeting separated.

373 CHRIST SET FORTH AS A PROPITIATION – ROM. 3:25

A Sermon

**Delivered on Friday Morning, March 29th, 1861,
by the**

REV. C. H. SPURGEON

At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

**“Christ Jesus whom God has set forth to be a propitiation
through faith in His blood.” — Romans 3:25**

WE COMMENCED the services in this place by the declaration that here Christ shall be preached. Our brother, who followed us, expressed his joy that Christ was preached herein. He did rejoice, yes, and would rejoice, and our friends must have observed, how, throughout the other services there has been a most blessed admixture not only of the true spirit of Christ, but of pointed and admirable reference to the glories and beauties of His person. This morning, which is the beginning of our more regular and constant ministry, we come again to the same noble theme. Christ Jesus is today to be set forth! You will not charge me for repeating myself—you will not look up to the pulpit, and say, “Pulpits are places of tautology.” You will not reply that you have heard this story so often that you have grown weary of it, for well I know that with you, the person, the character, and the work of Christ are always fresh themes for wonder! We have seen the sea, some of us, hundreds of times, and what an abiding sameness there is in its deep green surface; but who ever called the sea

monotonous? Traveling over it as the mariner does, sometimes by the year together; there is always freshness in the undulation of the waves, the whiteness of the foam of the breaker, the curl of the crested billow, and the frolicsome pursuit of every wave by its long train of brothers. Which of us has ever complained that the sun gave us but little variety—that at morn he yoked the same steeds, and flashed from his chariot the same golden glory, climbed with dull uniformity the summit of the skies, then drove his chariot downward, and bade his flaming coursers steep their burning hooves in the western deep? Who among us has complained of the monotony of the bread that we eat? We eat it today, tomorrow, the next day; we have eaten it for years passed, and though we have other savory matters therewith, yet still the one unvarying food is served upon the table, and the bread remains the staff of life. Surely I know that as Christ is your food, and your spiritual bread; as Christ is your sun, your heavenly light; as Christ is the sea of love in which your passions swim, and all your joys are found, it is not possible that you as Christian men and women should complain of a monotony in Him, “He is the same yesterday, today and forever,” and yet He has the dew of His youth. He is the manna in the golden pot which was always the same, but He is the manna which came from heaven which was every morning new. He is the rod of Moses which was dry, and changed not its shape, but He is also to us the rod of Aaron which buds and blossoms and brings forth almonds.

I come, then, now to preach Christ crucified, as God has set Him forth to be a propitiation for us through faith in His blood. To begin at once, then, we shall notice first, *what is meant here by God's setting forth Christ as a propitiation*. Secondly, we shall dwell upon the truth which may very naturally be drawn from the first—*Christ the propitiation, as looked upon by the believer*. And then, thirdly, putting the two together, I mean inverting the two

thoughts, we shall look at *Christ as set forth by us, and looked upon by God.*

I. First then, the text says of Christ Jesus, “**WHOM GOD HAS SET FORTH TO BE A PROPITIATION THROUGH FAITH IN HIS BLOOD.**”

The words, “set forth,” in the original may signify, “foreordained;” but according to eminent critics, it has also in it the idea of setting forth as well as a “foreordaining.” Barnes says, “The word properly means *to place in public view*; to exhibit in a conspicuous situation, as goods are exhibited or exposed for sale, or as premiums or rewards of victory were exhibited to public view in the games of the Greeks.” So has God the Father set forth, manifested, made conspicuous the person of the Lord Jesus as the propitiation of sin. How has He done this? He has done it first by *ordaining Him in the divine decree* as the propitiation of sin. Christ did not take upon Himself the office of High Priest without being chosen thereunto as was Aaron; as surely as every member of Christ’s body is elect according to the foreknowledge of God; as certainly as in God’s book all His members were written which in continuance were fashioned when as yet there was none of them, so certainly was the Head, Himself, ordained the chosen of God. As our poet puts it—

“Christ is My first elect He said,
Then chose our souls in Christ our Head.”

Perhaps some might say there could be no election where there was no room for choice. But how do we know that there was no room for choice? We can scarcely imagine that angel or archangel could have been set forth as propitiation for sin. Who can tell whether the Almighty mind might not have devised another plan? Who shall dare to limit the Holy One of Israel? At any rate, there was this choice between the Father, the Son,

and the Holy Spirit; the divine wisdom conjoined with divine sovereignty, and chose and appointed and determined that Christ Jesus, the second of the Mysterious Three, should be the propitiation for our sins. When Christ comes into the world, He comes as one of whom all eternity had spoken— He is the child born—born from the womb of destiny; He is the Lamb whom God had appointed from before the foundation of the world. Long before this world was made, or Adam fell, Christ had been set forth; in the volume of the Book, it had been written of Him, “I delight to do Your will, O God.” I think those who are afraid of looking back upon the great decrees of God, because they say they are secrets; have a fear where no fear is appropriate. There is never fear, my brothers and sisters, of our meddling with secret things. If they are secret, it is quite certain that we shall not meddle with them! Only let it be announced once and for all, that they are secret, and there is no one who *can* betray the secrets of God! But things that are revealed belong to us and to our children; and this is one of the things that is revealed; this is the decree and we will declare it, the Lord said unto Christ, “You are My Son, this day have I begotten You, and He has said unto Him moreover, I will make Him My first-born, higher than the Kings of the earth.” And all this that He may be the “propitiation for our sins by faith in His blood.”

And next, God had set forth Christ to be the propitiation for sins *in His promises before the advent*. Did He not set Him forth most plainly in the garden where we fell? Was He not plainly revealed afterwards in the ark in which Noah was saved? Did not God speak constantly, not only by verbal promises, but by typical promises, which are just as sure and certain as those which are spoken in words? Did He not to a 100 seers and to multitudes of holy men and women, constantly reveal the coming of Him who should bruise the serpent's head, and

deliver His people from the power of the curse? It is wonderful to see how engaged the Holy Spirit was through every age and era in ordaining types, in bringing forth representations, and symbols in which Christ should be set forth as being the appointed propitiation for sins through faith in His blood! But the great setting forth was *the actual doing of the deed* when Jesus Christ came forth from the chambers of mystery, and revealed Himself in the manger—when God set Him forth by angelic messengers appointed to be His attendants—set Him forth by the star in the East which should guide the distant strangers to the place where the young child was. He set Him forth afterwards by preserving His life in the midst of imminent perils, fulfilling promises made concerning His infancy in the place where He was hidden from Herod’s fury, and in the spot where He was educated and brought up. Throughout the life of Christ, how constantly did His Father set Him forth! The voice of God was in the voice of John—“Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world.” And on the cross itself, “when it pleased the Father to bruise Him, and put Him to grief,” what an exhibition was there of Christ to the eyes of Jew and Gentile, of prince and peasant, of the learned Greek, of the ruler Roman—that God had appointed Christ to be the full propitiation for sin! I think, my dear friends, while we must always regard the cross as being the representation of Christ’s love to His Church, we must also view it as being God setting forth to man the way by which He will accept man, pardon his sin, hear his prayer, and be reconciled with His erring creatures.

But, O my dear friends, this is not all; God the Father set forth Christ since then by signs following. What a setting forth that was of Christ the propitiator, *when the Holy Spirit came down* on Pentecost! And what have all conversions been since then? Have they not been repeated seals to the testimony that Christ is the appointed Redeemer of men, and that through Him the

faithful are justified and accepted? You, I trust—many of you—had such a special setting forth of Christ in your own hearts, that you can set your seal to the text before us for Him has God set forth in you as being the propitiation. By effectual grace your eyes have been opened—by infinite love your stubborn heart has been melted; you have been turned from every other hope and every other refuge; you have seen Christ to be the power of God, and the wisdom of God; compelled by an omnipotent influence which you neither could nor would resist, you have received Him as the Sent of God, have taken Him as being God's Messiah, and your only refuge. God *in you*, then, has graciously fulfilled the text, "Him has God set forth to be a propitiation."

But now, to change the subject for a moment, and yet to continue on the same point—what is it that God has so manifestly set forth? We have seen *how* He has done it—we turn now to *what*? Sinners, listen, and if you have already accepted that which the Father has revealed, let your joy become full. God has set forth Christ as being the propitiation! The Greek word has it, *ilasthrion*, which, being translated, may mean a mercy seat or a covering. Now, God has said to the sinner, "Do you desire to meet Me? Would you be no longer My enemy? Would you tell Me your sorrows? Would you receive My blessing? Would you establish commerce between your Creator and your soul? I set forth Christ to you as being the mercy seat, where I can meet with you, and you can meet with Me." Or take the word as signifying a covering—as the mercy seat covered the tablets of the law, and so covered that which was the cause of divine ire, because we had broken His commandments. "Would you have anything which can cover your sin? Cover it from Me, your God, so that I need not be provoked to anger? Cover it from you so that you need not be cowed with excessive fear, and tremble to approach Me as you

did when I came in thunder and lightning upon Sinai? Would you have a shelter which shall hide altogether your sins and your iniquities? I set it forth to you in the person of My bleeding Son! Trust in His blood and your sin is covered from My eyes—no, it shall be covered from your own eyes, too! And being justified by faith, you shall have peace with God through Jesus Christ your Lord.” Oh that we may have grace to accept now what God the Father sets forth! The Romish priest sets forth this and that; our own Romish hearts set forth such-and-such-another thing, but God sets forth *Christ*. The preacher of doctrine sets forth a *dogma*. The preacher of experience sets forth a *feeling*. The preacher of practice often sets forth an *effort*. But God puts before you, *Christ*. “*Here* will I meet with you. This is the place of My rest—glorious to Me, safe to you—come to Christ! Come to Christ, and you will come to Me.” The Lord Almighty comes to Christ, and there He comes to you. God, then, has set forth Christ Jesus—made Him conspicuous as being the mercy seat, and the great hider of sin!

What has He set forth? He has set forth Christ before every one of you, in the daily preaching of the Word, and in this Inspired Book as His anointed to do His work, suffering in the place of all who believe on Him. He has set Him forth as nailed to Calvary’s cross, that *your sins* might be nailed there; set Him forth as dying, that your sins might die—no, buried that your iniquities might be buried—risen, that you might rise to newness of life; ascended, that you might ascend to God; received in triumph, that you might be received in triumph, too; made to reign, that you might reign in Him; forever loved, forever crowned, that you in Him may be forever loved, and forever crowned, too. Christ has God the Father set forth, that by faith in His blood, your sins being put away, you might enjoy the blessing of complete justification! “Who is he that condemns, Christ has died, yes, rather, has risen again, and sits

at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.” “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” Thus, then, and in these respects, has God the Father set forth Christ.

II. And now, I proceed in the second place—and may the Spirit of God descend more visibly into our midst than at present—to speak upon a duty, rather a privilege, which so naturally rises out of God’s having shown forth His Son as being the propitiation through faith in His blood. That privilege is that **WE SHOULD LOOK TO CHRIST, AND LOOK TO CHRIST, ALONE, AS THE PROPITIATION FOR OUR SINS, AND TAKE CARE THAT OUR FAITH IS SIMPLE, AND FIXED SOLELY ON HIS PRECIOUS BLOOD.**

A very common mistake is to look to our sense of need as being, at least in some degree, a propitiation for sin. Repentance is an absolute duty and a Christian grace—a grace without which there can be no salvation; but there has been a strong temptation upon many minds to make *repentance* a preparation for Christ, and to regard a sense of need as being a kind of wedding garment in which they may approach the Savior. How many read that promise, “Come unto Me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest,” and they fondly imagine that if they could be more weary, and more heavily laden, then they would have rest? Whereas, being weary and heavy laden gives no man rest! It is *coming to Christ* that gives him rest; it is not the being weary and the being heavy laden! And I have known some ministers who preach what is called a deep experience and law-work, and preach very rightly, too, because many of the people of God have to endure this; but I think they lead the people into error, for the people imagine that this law-work, this deep experience, has something to do with the propitiation of their sins. Now, my hearers, the sins of God’s people are taken away by the *blood of Christ*, and not by any repentance of their own. I have already guarded my

statement, and now I will make it as bold as possible. I say that repentance of sin does in no way contribute to the removal of that sin meritoriously. I say that our sense of need does not take away our guilt, nor help to take it away; but the blood, the blood, the blood alone, pure and unmixed, has forever washed the people of God, and made them whiter than snow! So, poor heart, if your soul is as hard as a nether millstone; if your conscience seems to be seared by long habits of sin; if you cannot force tears from your eyes, and scarcely can get a groan from your heart—yet, you are groaning today because you cannot groan, weeping because you cannot weep, and sorrowing because you cannot sorrow—hear you, then, this gospel message! God the Father has set Christ forth to be your propitiation! Not your tender conscience; not your groans; not your sense of need; not your law-work; not your deep experience! He is enough without any of these—have faith in *His blood* and you are saved!

But again, many have fallen into another mistake. They make their propitiation depend upon their *evidences*. I would be the last to say, “Away with evidences, away with evidences,” for they are good things in their proper place; but there are too many persons who always judge of their past conversion, and ultimate salvation by present evidence. Judge, brothers and sisters, whether you could ever form a proper estimate of the world by its appearance on any one day; if I had taken you out a month ago into the fields, you would have declared that the trees were dead; what signs of life would you have perceived? The bulbs were buried in the ground—you might have taken a solemn oath that flowers were banished, and you might have imagined that because there were none, there never would be any! But what was your evidence of the world’s state worth? Look at it now—the buds are bursting on the trees; the flowers are springing from the sod; everything is hastening on towards

spring and summer. Why, as it is absurd and ridiculous for us to judge of the world's estate by the fact that there was a cloud today, and there was a shower of rain yesterday, and therefore, infer that the sun has lost its force and will never shine—it is just as ridiculous to judge of our standing before God by our present standing, according to our evidences on some one day! The right way to read evidences is this. First, my soul, whether you are saved or not, as a poor guilty sinner, look to Christ! When you have done this, then read your evidences— then— *not till then*. Then the blessed evidence will be a confirmation. The witness of the Spirit will confirm your faith; but if you look to your evidences *first*, you will be foolish indeed. It is as in a reflector—first, let us have the light, then will the reflector be of use to us to increase and reflect back the light; but if I take my reflector into a dark place and look for light in it, I shall find none—I must first see to the light itself—and then to the reflection of it. Our graces are the reflection of Christ's love; they are the tokens of it, but we had better go to Christ first, and then look to the tokens afterwards!

I am sure if you, as a spouse, had offended your husband, you would find but very sorry comfort in looking at those little tokens of love which in the past he had conferred on you. You would go to him *first*, ask him whether his love was still firm, whether he had forgiven the fault, and when you had received the assurance of his unabated and pure affection, could you go upstairs to the secret drawer, and look over the love notes and the love tokens—but they would have afforded you sorry comfort before. So with any child who has been chastened by his parent—if he thinks that his father is angry with him, he will not, if he is a wise child, a simple-hearted child, go up to the nursery, and look at the gifts which his father gave him—but going to his father's knee, he will look up with a tear in his eye and say, "Father do you love me? Can you forgive your

child?” And, when he has had the personal token, the kiss of acceptance, then may the child go back and see in every mouthful that he eats, and every garment which he wears, the sure token of his father’s continued affection! Evidences are good as second things, but as first things, they are usurpers and may prove anti-Christ to Christ. Whatever my evidences may say, if I believe in the precious blood, there is not a sin against me in God’s book, and in the teeth of everything which might make me tremble—

“Just as I am, without one plea,
But that His blood was shed for me
And that He bids me come,”

I come again, and come afresh to Him whom God has set forth to be the propitiation for our sins!

Friends, I may surprise you by what I am about to say, but there is another fault into which we sometimes fall, namely, looking to God’s *promises* instead of looking to Christ as the propitiation of sin. The text does not say that God the Father has set forth promises; indeed He has given us exceedingly great and precious promises, and they are true *in Christ*. We often err by going to promises, instead of going to Christ. I know many Christians who, when they are in distress, take up the Bible to find a promise—a very good and a very admirable plan, if, mark—it is preceded by something else! If they go to Christ *first*, they may come to the promise *afterwards*. “Yes,” says one, “but suppose a promise is fulfilled.” Very good; you have comfort out of it, but I say suppose the promise is *not* fulfilled? What then? Why it is just as sure for all that—whether the promise is fulfilled or not! Fulfillment is not *my* duty—*my* business is to take Christ, whom God the Father has set forth as the propitiation of my sins, and if in searching this book

through there is not a single promise which I dare lay hold of; if I cannot find one bottle filled with the rich wine of consolation—if I can lay hold on no bunch of the grapes of Eshcol, still, God the Father has set forth *Christ*, whatever else He has not set forth—and my eye looks to Christ and to Christ alone! There is a man who very much desires an estate. At the same time, his heart is smitten with the beauty of some fair heiress. He gets the title deeds of her estate. Well, the title deeds are good, but the estates are not his though he has got the title deeds! By-and-by he marries the lady, and everything is his own. Get the heiress and you have got the estate. It is so in Christ—promises are the title-deeds of His estates—a man may get the promises and not get Christ, and then, they will be of no more use to him than the deeds of another man's estate would be to me, if I am not the lawful proprietor. But when my soul is married unto Christ, then I am heir of all things in Him and with Him! Why, Christian, what right have you to say, "That promise is not mine because it is not fulfilled." Your right to the promise does not lie in its being *fulfilled*, nor yet in *your* power to lay hold of it! Every promise that is in the Bible belongs to everyone who is *in Christ*, and belongs to him as much one day as another day, because Christ is his at all times, evermore the same! Oh, I do not know whether I can put this exactly as I mean it. What I mean is that the devil has often tempted me with, "You have not had a promise sent home to your heart for months; you are no child of God; you cannot get that sweetness out of such-and-such a passage that some men can." I reply to Satan in this way, "Well, God has never said He has set forth the *promise* to be a propitiation through faith, but He has set forth *Christ*, and my soul accepts that which God has *set forth*, and if ever a promise is applied to me, the promise is mine for all that, and in faith I will lay hold on it, and defy you to rob me of it when my soul has laid hold on Christ." Oh,

that we lived more on Christ and less on anything but Christ—nearer to Christ’s person, more surely resting on Christ’s blood—more simply accepting Him as our all-in-all.

I have not yet done on this second head—a remark or two suggest themselves to me now. God has set forth Christ to be the propitiation through faith in His blood, and we ought to accept Christ as being an *all-sufficient propitiation*. I believe in Christ today; but if some sin lies upon my conscience and I am worried and troubled about it, ought I not to perceive at once that I have failed to accept Christ as an all-sufficient propitiation? Whether my sin is little or it is great, whether it is fresh or old, it is the same sin, and blessed be God, it has all been atoned for through Christ the propitiation! We ought to take Christ as being the death of every sin and of all sin—as having expunged and wiped out the great debt as well as the little—the 10,000 talents as well as the 100 pence. We have never gotten the full idea of Christ till we know that every sin of thought, of word, of deed that the believer has ever been guilty of finds its death, its drowning, its total annihilation in the propitiation which God has set forth! Oh, we need to come where Kent was, when he said—

“Now free from sin I walk at large
My Savior’s blood’s my full discharge!
At His dear feet my soul I lay
A sinner saved, and homage pay.”

Well, but when we have come as far as this, we need to add a second thought. God has set forth Christ to be not only an all-sufficient, but an *immutable* propitiation for sin. Christ is as much my soul’s propitiation when my soul has fallen into sin, as when I have stood firm and resisted temptation, if I am a believer. “That is putting it,” you say, “in a bold and almost

Antinomian way.” I cannot help it. It is true—it is true that the propitiation of Christ is never more, never less; it can’t be more, it is complete; it can’t be less, for it is the same yesterday, today and forever! That man who has been washed in blood is spotless; his doubts and fears have not spoiled his appearance, his powerlessness yesterday in prayer, his despondency a week ago, his all but complete unbelief last month, do not mar the perfection of Jesus’ righteousness—do not take away from the complete achievement of the pardon of his sin by precious blood! I do believe and hold and rejoice in that precious truth—that our standing before God, when we have believed in Jesus—depends no more upon *our* frames, and our feelings, than the sun itself in its native glory depends upon the clouds and darkness that are here below. The same—the same in all its splendor, the same undimmed, as full of glory, as full of majesty, the righteousness and blood of Christ abides; and we, standing before God in Him—not in ourselves—are always complete in Him—always accepted in the beloved; never more so, never less so. “Strong meat this,” says one. Be it strong—nothing short of this will ever satisfy the tried Christian in the hour when sin rolls over his head! If any man can make a bad use of the doctrine of the real substitution of Christ, and the standing of Christ’s people in Christ’s place every day—if any man can make a licentious use of that, his damnation is just; he has no part nor lot in this matter! But I know this—I am not to be restrained from the comfort of a doctrine because some licentious vagabond chooses to destroy his soul with it! Still there stands the glorious truth. And nothing short of this is the full glory of Christ’s atonement—that when once He shed His blood, and when once that blood has been applied to us, by *it*, and *it* alone, we stand completely pure and are as pure one day as another day—perfect, complete, accepted, made secure and safe in Christ Jesus the Lord. “Him has God the Father set

forth to be a propitiation for sin.” My soul accepts Him today as it did yesterday, and knows that the sin is put away forever.

III. Now, I shall come to my third and last point. Turn the thoughts over. We have said, God sets forth Christ, and we looked at Him. Now, as a matter of duty and privilege, we must **SET FORTH CHRIST**, and **GOD WILL LOOK AT HIM**.

The preacher, standing here as he does today before this immense assembly, knows that without God’s looking upon the ministry, it will be vain and void. How shall God’s eyes be secured? How shall His presence be guaranteed? If in this pulpit Christ is set forth, God will look down upon that Christ set forth, and honor and bless the Word. Brothers and sisters, I might preach clear doctrine, but God might never look down upon doctrine; for I could point you to churches with tears in my eyes, because I am able to do so, where conversions are rare things. The *doctrine* is high, high enough—perhaps so high as to have become putrid. I will not say that, but I do know some churches where there has not been an addition to the church by the stretch of ten or a dozen years together, and I have known the reason. Christ was not set forth, and therefore, God did not look down on what was set forth! I have known, too, churches—and with equal sorrow do I mention them—where *practice* has been preached, but not Christ. People have been exhorted to do 10,000 things; moral duties presented before the people in pleasing and well-polished essays have taken the place of the cross of Christ, and there have been no conversions! By degrees, the attendance has become very slender—for Christ is not preached. It is a strange thing—there are some exceptions to the rule, but still the rule is there even where there are not many to listen. Only preach Socinianism, and what a splendid hunting-ground this tabernacle will be for the spiders! Give up Christ, and preach philosophy—you need not have an organ, and a skillful person to play the people out of the church—they

would never need that. They will never come in! So it is. Those flimsy doctrines never can prevail because no one will listen to them—they are not attractive. They look as if they would attract all—but none can receive them; the secret being that God will not look down on any man's ministry unless that man sets forth what *God sets forth*—Christ Jesus as the propitiation of our sins!

It is not a question as to whether there will be conversions when Christ is set forth; that is certain. Some good brothers quote the text, “Paul *may* plant, and Apollos *may* water, but”—and they are a long while upon the, “but,” and they pervert the text a little, “but God gives the increase.” Now, the text does not say any such thing! It says, “Paul plants and Apollos waters, God gives the increase.” They are all linked together—Paul does not plant in vain; Apollos does not water in vain—God gives the increase! He is *sure* to do it, and if there are not souls saved, there is always some reason for it; and the reason to which I would look—leaving now the inscrutable sovereignty of God out of the question for a moment—the reason would be either that Christ is not preached, or else He is preached in such a way as He never ought to be preached—with cold-heartedness, with lack of zeal, with want of tenderness! Only let Christ be preached by an earnest heart, though there be no eloquence or though the elocution is defective—Christ being set forth, God the Holy Spirit will come forth, and the Word *must* and *will* be blessed! His Word shall not return unto Him void. It shall prosper where He has sent it.

But again, as in the ministry we must set forth Christ if we would have God's smile, so you, my brothers and sisters, in your pleadings for the souls of men, must set forth Christ. What a mass of wickedness is hereabouts. What tens of thousands in this immediate neighborhood who know nothing of God! Here is a city with very nearly three million inhabitants;

it is not a city, but an empire in itself. What shall we do when we are on our knees? I confess I have sometimes found myself utterly unable to express my desires in prayer to God for this city. When you once get a notion of its sin, its infamy, its dens, its innumerable missionaries teaching Satanic doctrines, its multitudes of men and women whose likelihood it is to ensnare the simple ones, it is an awful burden to carry before God! You cannot pray for London except in sighs and groans! Good old Roby Flockhart, who stood for many years in the streets of Edinburgh, used to be much laughed at, but he preached every night in the week, and had during the winter months a little lantern which he put upon a stick, and then stood in a corner and preached to the passers-by. He preached with a great power, but much eccentricity. That good man was eminent in his prayers when alone. A gentleman who was extremely poor, told me that he went one night to see poor Robert; the candle had been blown out, and he stumbled his way up two or three pair of stairs and came at last to Flockhart's room; he opened the door and he could not see the good old man, but he could hear him say, "O Lord, dinna forget Edinboro, dinna forget Edinboro, turn not away Your hand from auld Reekie, dinna forget her, Lord! Your servant will never give You rest till You pour out Your spirit upon Edinboro." My friend stood still, and there was that old man alone with his God—my friend had never heard such groaning and crying—it seemed as if he could even hear the falling of his tears while he prayed for God to bless Edinburgh, and to pour out His Spirit upon that city. He made some noise, and the old man said, "There is somebody there I suppose." He struck a light and found he had taken one of the pillows of his bed to kneel upon by the side of an old chair which was about the only furniture, with the exception of the bed. He would pray for Edinburgh by the hour together, and then go out to preach, though many laughed at and hooted

him. Oh, one wants to feel like that for London, too, kneeling there till one's knees are sore, crying, "Do not forget London, do not forget London! Lord, do not turn Your face from London! Make bare Your arm in this great city." But how are we to make our prayers prevail with God? Brothers and sisters, we must show forth *Christ* in prayer, and then God will look upon our prayers! The Methodist cry which was once heard at the prayer meeting when a poor Methodist brother could not go on, and someone at the far end of the chapel cried out, "Plead *the blood*, brother, plead *the blood*"—that old Methodist cry has force and power in it! "Plead the blood." God *can't, can't, can't* resist the cry of the blood of Christ! Abel's blood demanded vengeance, and it had it. Christ's blood demands pardons, and shall have it, must have it—our God cannot be deaf to the cry of His own Son's blood! And if you and I, and all of us together can plead the precious blood of Christ for London, a revival must come, will come, shall come, and the face of the times shall be changed! God's arm shall be revealed, and "All flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it."

Yet, once again, and here with affectionate earnestness—I come to plead personally with each of you. Soul, are you this morning sick of self, and longing to be saved? Do your sins condemn you? Do the lusts accuse you; does your conscience flog you? Have you been to God in prayer? Have you sought for mercy, and has no mercy come? Have you read the Bible to find a promise? Has no promise dropped with honey to you? Come, I pray you, and obey the Word of God which I utter in your hearing—come and take CHRIST, and show Christ's blood to God, and He will, He *must* smile upon you! If you cannot take the promise, take the BLOOD! If you cannot come before God with any feelings, come with CHRIST in your hands! "May *I* trust Christ?" asks one. *May* you?! You are

commanded to do it! He who believes not has made God a liar *because* he believes not! He who believes has set to his seal that God is true! Sinner, God is satisfied with Christ; does He satisfy God, and will He not satisfy you? The eternal judge has accepted Jesus, and do you refuse Him? The Lord has opened the door, and stands at it. Is the door good enough for the king, and yet not good enough for a rebel like yourself? “*But.*” Away with your “buts!” You want to bring something to *add* to Christ—is He enough to reconcile God, and not enough to reconcile you? “But, but,” again. So God thinks the precious blood to be a sufficient price, and you think it is not? Oh, fool, and slow of heart, how dare you think that God has not set forth enough, but you must add to it! Instead of this, I pray you in Christ’s stead; believe in Christ as you are! *Whoever* you may be, *whatever* your past life has been, *whatever* your present feelings are—entrust your soul with Christ, and God declares that your sins are put away! Put your soul as it is—I care not how black with sin, it matters not how depraved it is—put it here on that mercy seat which God has set forth, and you have put it where God commanded you put it, and its salvation rests no more with *you*. You have put your salvation into Christ’s hands, it is His business to save you, and He will do it—

“I know that safe with Him remains
Protected by His power
What I’ve committed to His hands
Till the decisive hour.”

I do not know how it is, but this simple doctrine is the hardest doctrine to make clear. It seems so easy, and yet many will mystify and doubt it. “What, no good *works*, no good *feelings*?” All these things are *fruits* of grace—but salvation does not *depend* upon good works—they are a *result* of salvation.

Salvation is *in Christ*, wholly in Christ—in Christ alone—and the moment any of you trust Him genuinely to be your sole and only Savior, you have accepted God's propitiation, and God has accepted you. It is not possible for the Lord, unless He could reverse His nature, to stain His honor, belie His character, make His word a farce, and the atonement of Christ a falsehood—to reject any man under heaven who believes in Christ, and takes Him to be His all-in-all!

This day is called Good Friday—may it be a *good* Friday to some of you! Perhaps I have some here to whom I have preached these last seven years, and yet you have remained unsaved. I am clear of your blood if you had only heard but this one morning sermon, for God witnesses, I know not how to put the plan of salvation more clearly than I have done! “God has set forth Christ to be a propitiation through His blood.” I bid you look to Christ bleeding, to Christ sweating drops of blood, Christ scourged, Christ nailed to the cross, and if you believe in Christ's blood, He is the propitiation of your sins. But I can do no more than this; it is mine to preach, it is mine to pray, and mine to plead. Oh, may God the Holy Spirit give you grace to receive, to accept, to yield to this blessed proclamation of free mercy! Other salvation there is none. You may rack your soul with pain, and wear out your bones with toil, but there is rest nowhere but here, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” “He who with his heart believes, and with his mouth makes confession, shall be saved.” “For he who believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he who believes not shall be damned.” What shall I say? Instead of pleading further with you, I would plead with God in private that many of you may now try whether Christ cannot save you. Rest yourself *on* Him, trust yourself *with* Him, and He will be as good as His word, and *save you* now, and save you even to the end. The Lord add His blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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A Sermon

Delivered on Friday Morning, March 29th, 1861,

by the

REV. C. H. SPURGEON

At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“My Beloved is mine, and I am His.” — Song of Solomon
2:16

THE CHURCH SAYS concerning her Lord, “My Beloved is mine, and I am His.” No “ifs,” no “buts.” The two sentences are solemn assertions. Not, “I hope, I trust, I think.” But, “My Beloved is mine, *and I am* His.” “Yes,” but you will say, “the Church must then have been gazing upon her husband’s face. It must have been a season of peculiar enjoyment with Him, when she could speak thus.” No, brothers and sisters, no! The Church, when she thus spoke, was in darkness, for in the very next verse she cries— “Until the day breaks, and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved, and be You like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bethel.” I say, brothers and sisters, this solemn certainty, this double assertion of her interest in Christ, and Christ’s interest in her, is the utterance of the Church even in her darkness, in the cheerless season of His absence! So then, you and I, if we believe in Christ, ought, even when we do not see His face, still to cultivate full assurance of faith, and never be satisfied unless we can say, “My Beloved is mine, and I am His.” When you cannot say this, my hearer, give no sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids. Be not happy; take no solace; find no comfort as long as there is any doubt

about your union with the Beloved—His possession of you and your possession of Him! We will now, having thus prefaced the text, come at once to it. There are two members, you perceive, to the sentence, “My Beloved is mine, and I am His.” These two things come in a strange order, you will say, “Surely we are first Christ’s, before Christ is ours.” A right thought of yours. We shall take the text, then, this evening two ways. We shall first speak of it *as it would be in the order of time*. “I am my Beloved’s, and my Beloved is mine.” We shall afterwards speak *in the order of the text, which is the order of experience*. The words as Solomon penned them are not the order of fact as far as God is concerned, but the order in which we find out God’s great doings!

You know God’s first things are our second things, and our second things are God’s first things. “Make your calling and election sure.” Calling is your first thing—election is the second. But election is God’s first thing, and calling is the next! You are not elected because you are called; and yet, at the same time, you shall never know your election until first you have made your calling and election sure! The order of the text is the order of *experience*. We shall take the members of the sentence as they would be if they spoke in the order of fact.

I. To begin, then, I AM MY BELOVED’S, AND MY BELOVED IS THEREFORE MINE.

1. “*I am my Beloved’s.*” Glorious assertion! I am His *by His Father’s gift*. Long before suns and moons were made, and stars twinkled in the midnight darkness, God the eternal Father had given the chosen to Christ, to be His heritage and marriage dowry. If God, then, has given my soul to Christ, I am my Beloved’s. Who shall dispute the right of God to give, or who shall take from Christ that which His Father has given to be His heritage? Fiends of hell! Legions of the pit! When God gives, can you take back the gift? If He puts the souls of the

chosen into the hands of Christ, can you pluck them from Him? If *He* makes them Christ's sheep, can you pluck them out of His fold, and make them your own? God forbid we should indulge the blasphemous thought, that any can dispute the ownership which Christ has in His people, derived from His Father's gift!

But I am my Beloved's, if I am a believer, because of *Jesus Christ's purchase* of me. We were bought not with corruptible things, as with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. Christ has an absolute right to all that He bought with His blood. I do not believe in that dreamy atonement, by which Christ redeems, and purchases, and yet the purchase is a fiction, and the redemption a metaphor! All that Christ bought with blood He will have. If a man buys with gold and silver of an honest man, he gets his own, nor will he be content until he does; but when Christ ransoms with His blood and buys of God Himself, and redeems His own people, it is not possible that He should be frustrated of His purpose or denied the objective of His death! I am my Beloved's then, because He has paid the full price for me, counted down the purple drops, and positively and surely has as much bought me with His money as ever Abraham of old bought flocks of sheep and oxen, or as ever of old Jacob served for Rachel and for Leah. No title deeds ever made estates more truly the property of the purchaser; than did the resurrection guarantee the rights of Christ in the "purchased possession." "I am my Beloved's," by a double tie—by the Father's gift, and by the Son's divine purchase. These two things are not easily reconcilable to some minds. But let it be carried in your hearts as a matter of fact, that there is as much grace in the Father's giving the elect to Christ as if no price were paid, and secondly, that there was as full and true a price paid to the Father as though the Father had been justice only, and not love. The grace of God and His justice are, both

of them, full-orbed, they are never eclipsed; they are never made to you with divided luster; He is as gracious as though He were not just; He is as awfully severe as though there were no grace in His nature.

But, more than this, “I am my Beloved’s,” for, I am His *by conquest*. He fought for me, and He won me, let Him possess me. He went alone to that great battle. He defied all the hosts which had made me their prey, encountered first my sins, and slew them with His blood, He encountered Satan himself next, and bruised the serpent’s head, encountered death, and slew him by “destroying him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.” O Christ! You deserved to have those for whom You did wrestle and agonize even unto blood, and who by Your strong hand, You brought out of the land of their captivity! Never could a conqueror claim a subject so justly as Christ claims His people; they were not only His, eternally His, by the purchase of His blood, but they are His because He has taken them by overwhelming might, having delivered them out of the hand of him who was stronger than they! That word which He gird upon His thigh, is both the right by which He claims, and the might by which He keeps His ransomed.

Besides this, every true believer can add, “I am my Beloved’s,” by a *gracious surrender*. “With full consent I give myself to You.” This is your language, brothers and sisters. It is mine. “I am my Beloved’s.” If I were never His before, I do desire to give myself up to Him now. His Love shall be the fetters in which I, a happy captive, will walk at His triumphant chariot wheels. His grace shall bind me with its golden chains so that I will be free and yet His bondman forever. The mercies of each hour shall be fresh links, and the benefits of each day and night shall be new rivets to the chain. No Christian would like to be his own; to be one’s own is to be lost; but to be Christ’s is to be saved! To be one’s own is to be a wandering

sheep; to be Christ's is to return to the great bishop and shepherd of our souls. Do you not remember, many of you, the night when you first surrendered to Christ? He stood at the door and knocked—the door was overgrown with brambles; the hinges had rusted from long disuse; the key was lost; the keyhole of the lock was welded together with filth and rust. Yes, from within the door was bolted fast! He knocked—at first a gentle knock, enough to let you know who it was. You laughed. He knocked again. You heeded not; you heard His voice as he cried, “Open to Me, open to Me. My hair is wet with dew, and My locks with the drops of the night.” But you had a thousand frivolous excuses, and you would not open to Him! Oh, do you remember when at last He put in his hand by the hole of the lock, and your heart was moved for Him? “Jesus! Savior! I yield, I yield! I can hold out no longer, my heart melts. My cruel soul relents. Come in! Come in! Please pardon me that I have kept You out so long; resisted so long the wooings of Your heavenly love.” Well, you will say tonight, and set your solemn hand and seal to it, that you are Christ's because you do once again, voluntarily and freely, surrender yourself to Him!

I think tonight would be a very proper occasion for each of us to renew our dedication vows. We are, many of us, believers; let us go to our chamber and say thus—“O God! You have heard our prayers as a Church. We have entered into Your house; we have seen it filled to the full. By this, the answer which You have given to our prayers, we rededicate ourselves to You, desiring to say with the spouse more fully than heretofore, ‘I am my Beloved's.’”

Let us pause here an instant. We have seen how we came to be our Beloved's, let us inquire in what sense we are so now.

We are His, first of all, by *a near affinity* that never can be broken. Christ is the Head; we are His members. There is nothing which my Head possesses so truly as my hands, and

my heart. Your head could not say that its helmet and plume are so truly its own as the neck, the sinews, the veins, which are joined thereunto. The head manifestly has a distinct and peculiar property in every member. “I am my Beloved’s,” then, even as my hands and feet are mine. “I am my Beloved’s”—if He loses me, I will be mutilated. “I am my Beloved’s,” if I am cut away, or even wounded, He will feel the pain. The Head *must* suffer, when the members are tempted and tried. There is nothing so true and real, in the sense of property, as this! I would that you who doubt the perseverance of the saints would take these few words to heart. If once Christ should lose His people, He would be a head without a body. That would be a ghastly sight! No, if He lost one of His people, He would be the head of a mutilated body—that would not be a glorious sight. If you imagine the loss of one mystical member of Christ, you must suppose an imperfect Christ—one whose fullness is not full, whose glory is not glorious, whose completeness is not complete! Now I am sure you would reject that idea. And it will be joy for you to say, “As the members belong to the head, so am I my Beloved’s.”

Further than this—we are our Beloved’s by a most *affectionate relationship*. He is the Husband, believers are the spouse. There is nothing that a man has that is so much his property as his own wife, except it be his very life. A man’s wealth may melt by losses; a man’s estate may be sold to pay his debts; but, a man’s wife, as long as she lives, is his absolute property. She can say, “He is mine.” He can say, “She is mine.” Now Christ says of all His people, “You are mine, I am married to you; I have taken you unto Myself, and betrothed you unto Me in faithfulness.” What do you say? Will you deny the celestial marriage bond? God forbid! Will you not say to your Lord tonight, “Yes, I am my Beloved’s”? Ah, there is no divorce court in heaven; there is no division; no separation bill

possible, for He “hates divorce.” If chosen, He will not reject; if once embraced, He will never cast out; His she is, and His she shall be forevermore. In this sense, then, “I am my Beloved’s.”

Yet once more—“I am my Beloved’s” by an *indissoluble connection*, just as a child is the property of his father. The father calls his child his own. Who denies it? What law is so inhuman as to allow another to tear away the offspring of his heart from the parent? There is no such law among civilized men! Among the aboriginal savages of the Southern States of America, such a thing may exist; but among civilized men there can never be any dispute but that the father’s right to his child is supreme, and that no master, and no owner can override the rights of the parents to his children. Come, then—even so are we His! “He shall see *His* seed.” “He shall see of the travail of His soul.” If He could lose His glories, if He could be driven from His kingdom, if He could be despoiled of His crown, if His throne could totter, if all His might could melt away as the snow wreath melts before the summer’s sun—yet at least His seed would be His own! No law, human or divine, could disown the believing child, or unfather Christ, the Everlasting Father. So then, it is a great joy to know that each believer may say, in the highest sense—“I am my Beloved’s. I am His child, and He is my parent.” I half wish that instead of my preaching now, we could stand up, each of us who feel the force of this sweet sentiment, and say, “‘Tis true, great God; by eternal donation, by complete purchase, by a full surrender, by a mighty conquest, I am my Beloved’s. He is my Head, my Husband, my Father, and my All.”

2. The second sentence in order of time is, “My Beloved is mine.” Ah, you very poor men and women, you who could not call one foot of land your own, and probably never will till you get the space where you lie down to sleep the sleep of death! If

you can say, “My Beloved is mine,” you have greater wealth than Croesus ever knew, or than a miser ever dreamed! If my soul can claim Christ, the eternal God and the perfect man, as being my own personal property, then my soul is rich to all the intents of bliss—even if the body walks in rags, or should the lips know hunger, or the mouth be parched with thirst!

But how is my Beloved mine? He is mine, because *He gave Himself to me of old*. Long before I knew it, or had a being, He covenanted to bestow Himself on me—on all His chosen. When He said, “Lo, I come; in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O God,” He did in fact become My substitute, giving Himself to do my work, and bear my sorrow! Mine He is because *that covenant has been fulfilled* in the *actual gift*. For me (I speak in the first person, because I want you each to speak in the first person, too), for you, my soul, He laid aside His robes of glory to become a man; for you He was swaddled in the weakness of Infancy and lay in the poverty of the manger; for you, my soul, He bore the infant body, the childish form, and the human flesh and blood; for you the poverty which made Him cry, “Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but I, the Son of man, have not where to lay My head.” For you, my soul, for you that shame and spitting, that agony and bloody sweat, that cross that crown of thorns, those expiring agonies, that dying groan! “My Beloved,” in all this, “is mine.” Yes, yours the burial; yours the resurrection and its mystic meaning; yours the ascension and its triumphant shouts; yours the session at the right hand of God; yes, and by holy daring we avow it, He who sits today, “God over all, blessed forever,” is ours in the splendor of His majesty, in the invincibility of His might, in the omnipresence of His power, in all the glory of His future advent! Our Beloved is ours, because He has given Himself to us, just as He is.

But besides that, our Beloved is not only ours by His own gift, which is the reality of it all, but He is ours by a *graciously completed union*. What a wonderful thing is the doctrine of union with Christ. “We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.” Christ and His Church are one—one as the stones are one with the foundation; one, as the branches are one with the vine; as the wife is one with the husband; one, as the members are one with the head—as the soul is one with the body—no, if there can be conceived a union closer, and there is but one, we are one with Christ, even as Christ is one with His Father! “I in them, and You in Me;” for thus the union stands; now, as soon as ever we are one with Christ, you see at once that Christ must be ours. There is a common property between Christ and His people. All theirs belongs to Him—His belongs to them. They have not two stocks, they have but one. He has cast in His wealth, they have cast in their poverty—from that day they have common funds. They have but one purse—they have all things in common. All He is and all He has is theirs, and all they are or can be belong to Him.

I might add, but this is a high point, and needs to be experienced, rather than preached upon, Christ is ours *by His indwelling*. Ignatius used to call himself the God-bearer and when some wondered at the title, he said—“I carry God about within me; our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit.” That is an amazing text, amazing in the splendor of its meaning! Does the Holy Spirit dwell in a man? Yes, that He does! Not in this temple, “not in tabernacles made with hands.” That is to say, of man’s *building*, but within this soul, and in your soul, and in the souls of all His called ones, He dwells. “Abide in Me,” He said, “and I in you.” Christ *must* be in you, the hope of glory;

Christ must be formed in you, as He was in Mary, or you have not come yet to know to the fullest, the divine meaning of the spouse, when she said—“My Beloved is mine, and I am His.”

Now, tonight, I wish that we could get practical good, to our comfort, out of the thought that Christ is ours, if we are believers. Hear me, then, a moment or two, while I dilate upon that thought. Christ is *surely* yours. It is not a questionable property, a matter to be put into dispute with heaven's court; beyond question Christ *is* the *property*—the rightful *heritage*—of every elect and called one!

Again—Christ *is ours personally*. We sometimes speak of severally and jointly. Well then, Christ is ours jointly; but, blessed be His name, He is ours severally, too! Christ is as much yours tonight, however mean you may be, as though He did not belong to another man living. The whole of Christ is yours! He is not part mine, and part yours, and part another man's. He is all mine, all yours—*personally* mine, *personally* yours! Oh that we could realize this fact!

And then, again, Christ is *always* ours. He is never more ours at one time, and less ours at another. The moment we believe in Him, we may know our perfect and invariable right to Christ; a right which depends not upon the changes of the hour, or upon the temperature of our frames and feelings, but upon those two immutable things wherein it is impossible for God to lie. Christ is ours tonight; and, glory be to His name for it, if we believe, He is ours forever—

“This sacred bond shall never break,
Though earth's old columns bow!
The strong, the feeble and the weak
Can claim their Savior now!”

And this they shall do, perhaps with greater joy, but not with greater *right*, when they stand before the throne of God!

I cannot, tonight, in a place to which I am so little accustomed, bring all my thoughts together as I would. But, I think if I could but put this truth of God before you, or rather, if the Spirit of God would put it so that you could feel Christ to be yours, it would make you spring from your pew with ecstasy! Why, it is enough to thrill every chord in a man; and if a man may be compared to a harp, make every string in him pour forth an ocean of music! Christ *mine*—*myself* Christ's—there cannot be a more joyous or more heavenly theme beneath the skies!

II. I have thus completed the first work of this evening—taking the sentences of the text in the order of *time*. I shall now take the text **IN THE ORDER IN WHICH IT IS GIVEN TO US, WHICH IS THE ORDER OF OUR EXPERIENCE.**

Do you not see, that to a man's experience, God's order is reversed? We begin thus—"My Beloved is mine." I go to Him, take Him up in the arms of my faith, as Simeon took up the little Child in the Temple, and pressing Him to my heart, I say—"Jesus, You are mine. All unholy and unclean, I nevertheless obey Your command; I believe You, I take You at Your word; I touch the hem of Your garment; I trust my soul wholly with You; You are mine and my soul can never part with You." What next? Why then, the soul afterwards says—"Now I am Yours, tell me what You would have me to do. Jesus, let me abide with You. Lord, I would follow You wherever You go; put me on any service, dictate to me any commandment; tell me what You would have me do to glorify You"—

"Through floods, through flames, if Jesus leads,
I'll follow where He goes."

For I am His! Christ is mine—this is faith. I am His—this is good works. Christ is mine—that is the simple way in which the soul is saved! I am Christ's—that is the equally simple method by which salvation displays itself in its practical fruits. I am afraid some of you have never carried out the last sentence, "I am Christ's." I know some, for instance, who believe (mark, I am not speaking to those *who do not*) who believe it to be the duty of every Christian to profess his faith in Baptism, but nevertheless are not baptized. They say they are Baptists in *principle*. They are Baptists without any principle at all! They are men who know their Master's will, and do it not, and they shall surely be beaten with many stripes. In other men it becomes a sin of ignorance; but with such men it is willful. They reply, "It is a nonessential." Things non-essential to salvation are nevertheless essential to *obedience*! As I said a few Sabbaths ago, you would not like a servant who only did what he liked to do, and told you that some of your commands were non-essential. I am quite certain that if a soldier did not load his gun, or stand in rank, or shoulder arms at the word of command, the court martial would never listen for an instant to the plea of non-essential! God's commands require *obedience*, and it is *essential* that every servant be found faithful. I say, it is exceedingly *essential* to a Christian to do what he is told to do. Whatever Jesus bids us do, if it save us from *nothing*, at any rate the fulfillment of it will save us from the sin of being disobedient to Him!

Now will you try, my dear friends, not in the one command only, which lies at the threshold of the house, but in all others, to feel that you are not your own? "Ah," says one man, "I am not my own; I have so much to do for my family." Another says, "I am not my own; I belong to a political party." Another, "I am not my own; I belong to a firm." Just so—all these are ways in which men are kept from saying, "I am my Beloved's,

and my Beloved is mine.” Oh that we could, by any means whatever, feel that we were all Christ’s! I, though I had a drop of blood in my veins that was not His, I would seek to have it let out; and if there were a single power I have—mental, physical, or spiritual which could not and would not serve God, though it might impair my comfort—I would devoutly pray that this Jonah might be thrown into the sea, this Achan stoned with stones, this Haman hanged on the gallows! This cankered thing, it is a deadly thing—this damnable thing must be cut away, once and for all, for, “Better to enter into heaven halt and maimed, than having two eyes and two arms to be cast into hell fire.” We must have eyes that see Christ! We must feel that we are all Christ’s, and live as if we were all Christ’s, for we have no right to say, “My Beloved is mine,” unless we can add, “And I am His.” Why look, sirs, look at the great multitude of professors. How few there are who live as if they belonged to Christ! They act independently of *Him*! They buy, they sell on their own account—that they are *stewards* never penetrate their thick brains; that all they have is not their own, but His, never seems to have come into their heart, though they have sung it with their lips—

“And if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call,
I love my God with zeal so great,
That I would give Him all.”

Many a man has sung that, with his thumb-nail going round a coin in his purse, to find out whether it was a four penny or a three penny bit! He says he would give Christ all; but then he means that the bill is to be drawn at a very long credit, and he will pay when he dies—he will give up what he cannot take away with him—and when he leaves his rotten carcass, he will

leave his rotten wealth. Oh that we could all feel that we were all Christ's! Why, the Church of God would not be penned and shut up within the narrow bounds of England and America for long, if once we felt we were Christ's! At this very moment China is open to Christian enterprise. The leader of the so-called "rebels" turns out to be, after all, a man who is exceedingly enlightened in the things of God. He has said to Mr. Roberts, the missionary, "I open today 18 chapels in Nanking—write to your friends and tell them to come over and preach, and we will be glad to hear them. I give you a passport that no man may touch you, and any man who will preach Christ's gospel shall go unharmed through my dominions." And he actually issued, but a few days before the coming of the last mail, a proclamation by which all idolatry is abolished throughout his dominions, and witchcraft and fortunetelling are made crimes, and he invites, and prays specifically that his brothers in England will send over the Word of life, that they may have it among the people. Now I do honestly avow, if this place had not been built, and I had had nothing beyond the narrow bounds of the place in which I have lately preached, I would have felt in my conscience bound to go to learn the language and preach the Word there! But I now know what to do. I *must* here abide, for this is my place; but I would to God some were found in the Church, some in London, who have not such a gracious tie as this to keep them in their own land, to say, "Here am I, send me. I am Christ's man; there is Christ's field. Let me go and reap it, for the harvest is ripe. Help me, O God, and I will seek to ingather it for Your honor." "My Beloved is mine, and I am His." That last, "I am His" would make life cheap, and blood like water, and heroism a common thing, and daring but an everyday duty, and self-sacrifice the very spirit of the Christian life! Learn well, then, the meaning of that sentence, "*I am His.*"

But, will you please notice once again—I fear lest I shall weary you, and therefore will be brief)—“My Beloved is mine”—that is my calling. He calls me to Him. He gives Himself to me. He is mine. I am His—that is my *election*! I was His before I knew Him *to be mine*; but I learned my calling first, and my election *afterwards*. We have scores of people who will not come to Christ because they cannot understand election. Meet a boy in the street, and invite him to go to a two-penny school. “No,” says the boy, “I don’t feel fit to go to a national school to learn to read and write—for, to tell you the truth, I don’t understand the Hebrew language.” You would reply, “But, my good lad, you will learn Hebrew *afterwards*, if you can—but that is no reason, at any rate, why you should not learn English first! Come first to the little school; you shall go afterwards to the grammar school; if you get on, you shall go to the University, take your B.A. degree, and perhaps come out as a Master of Arts.” But here we have poor souls that want to have their M.A. before they have gone to the penny school! They want to read the volumes before they will read the primer book. They are not content to spell A, B, C—“I am a sinner, Christ is a Savior”—but they long to turn over the book of decrees, and find out the deep things of God. You shall find them out *afterwards*—you shall go step by step, while the Master shall say to you each time, “friend, come up higher.” But if you *begin* with election, you will have to come *down* again—for there will be a more honorable man than you who will come in, and you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. I have seen plenty of high-flying Christians who began at the top of the tree; they were *the* men; wisdom would die with them; the judges, the dictators, the very consuls, the cardinals, the popes—they knew everything. And whenever such men are gracious men, the Lord always puts the lancet into them, and makes them grow smaller and smaller, and smaller, till at last they say, “Woe

is me, for I am undone.” And they cry, “My soul is even as a weaned child.” *Begin* at the bottom and grow *up*. But do not begin at the top and come down! *That* is hard work—but going up is pleasant work, joyous work! Begin by saying, “My Beloved is mine.” You shall come to know your election, by-and-by, and say, “I am His.”

And now I do not think I will preach any longer about my text, but just come down upon my hearers for a few minutes, with all my might! How many among us can dare to say this tonight? Hundreds of you can! Thousands of you can! If this were the Day of Judgment—if tonight you stood, fresh risen from your graves—if *now* you heard the trumpet sound—if *now* you saw the King in His beauty sitting upon the great white throne, I know that many of you would say, “My Beloved is mine, and I am His.” If this day the millennial reign of Christ had begun—if the vials had been opened, the plagues poured out, and if now Christ were come—that the wicked might be driven out, and that His saints might reign—I am sure there are many of you who would say, “Welcome, welcome, Son of God! My Beloved is mine, and I am His.” And there are many of you, too, who if the angel of death should pass the pew, and flap his black wings into your face, and the cold air of death should smite you, would say, “’Tis well, for my Beloved is mine, and I am His.” You could shut your eyes and your ears to the joys, and to the music of earth, and you could open them to the splendors and melodies of heaven! To be fearless of death should always be the mark of the Christian. Sometimes a sudden alarm may rob us of our presence of mind; but no believer is in a healthy state if he is not ready to meet death at any hour, and at any moment. To walk bravely into the jaws of the dragon—to go through the iron gates and to feel no terror—to be ready to shake hands with the skeleton king; to look on him as a *friend*, and no more a foe—this should be the

habitual spirit, and the constant practice of the heir of heaven. Oh, if this is written on my soul, “My Beloved is mine, and I am His!” Come, welcome death—

“Come, death, and some celestial band,
I’ll gladly go with you.”

But—and a solemn “But”—pass the question round these galleries, and in this area, and how many among you must say, “I never thought of that. I never thought whether I was Christ’s, or Christ mine.” I will not rebuke you tonight. I will not thunder at you. God’s grace to me forbids that *this* should be a day of thunder. Let it be a day of feasting to everyone, and of sorrow to none. What shall I say to you, then, but this? O that Christ *may* be yours! When He was here on earth, He chose to go among sinners— sinners of the blackest hue! And now He is in heaven; up yonder He loves sinners as much as He ever did. He is as willing to receive you tonight as to receive the thief! It will give as much joy to His heart to hear your cry tonight, as when He thanked God that these things were revealed unto babes. It is to His honor that you should be His; it is to His joy that He should be yours. Sinner! If you will have Christ—if now the Spirit of God makes you willing—there is no bar on God’s part when the bar is taken away on your part! If you are willing, by His grace, He is more willing than you are! If the gate of your heart is on the latch, the gate of heaven is wide open! If your soul does but yearn after Christ, His heart has long yearned after you! If you have but a spark of love to Christ, He has a furnace of love to you; and if you have none at all—no love, no faith—oh I pray you have it *now*! “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” You! You! YOU! Did you come here out of curiosity? Zaccheus heard Christ out of curiosity; but he was saved. Did you come for a worse

purpose? God bless you, anyhow, for whatever reason you came; and may He bring you to Himself tonight! Trust Christ now, and you are saved. My life for yours—if you perish trusting in Christ, I will perish, too! Even should I have an ear listening to me which belongs to a harlot, to a thief, to a murderer, yet, “He who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved.” And if you believe in Him, and you are lost, I will be lost with you; and the whole Church of Christ must be lost, too; for there is the same way to heaven for the best as for the worst—for the most vile as for the most righteous! “No man comes unto the Father but by Christ.” Nothing can damn a man but his own righteousness! Nothing can save him but the righteousness of Christ. All your sin—your past sin—shall not destroy you—if you now believe in Jesus! It shall be cast into the sea forever, and you shall begin again as though you had never sinned. His grace shall keep you for the future, and you shall hold on your way an honor to Christ’s grace, and a joy to your own soul! But if you are disobedient and will not eat of the good of the land, then will I say, as Isaiah said of old, “I am found of them that sought Me not, but all day long have I stretched out My hands to an ungodly and gain-saying generation.” God *has* stretched out His hands! Oh that you were wise and would run into His arms tonight!

I know I am speaking to some self-righteous men—some who say, “It is a shame to tell men they are depraved. *I am not.*” Well, we think if their lives were written, it might be proved they were. “It is a shame,” they say, “to tell men that they cannot get to heaven by their good works, because then they will be wicked.” It is an odd thing, that the more this truth is preached, the better the people are! Preaching good works as the way to heaven always makes drunkards and thieves, but preaching faith in Christ always produces the best effects. Dr. Chalmers, who was no fanatic, says, “When I preached mere

morality, I preached sobriety till they were all drunkards; I preached chastity till it was not known anywhere; I preached honesty till men grew to be thieves. But,” he says, “as soon as ever I preached Christ, there was such a change in the village as never was known!” Well, we believe that self-righteousness will destroy you, my friend, and we therefore tell you, honestly and plainly, that you might as well hope to get to heaven by flying up in a balloon as to get there by your good works! You may as soon sail to India in a sieve as get to glory by your own goodness; you might as well go to court in cobwebs as seek to go to heaven in your own righteousness. Away with your rags, your filthy, rotten rags! They are only a harbor for the parasites of unbelief and pride! Away with your rotten righteousness, your counterfeit gold, your forged wealth! It is of no worth whatever in the sight of God! Come to Him empty, poor, naked! It grates on your proud ears, does it? Better, I say, to lose your pride than to lose your soul! Why be damned for pride’s sake? Why carry your head so high that it must be cut off? Why feed your pride on your soul’s blood? Surely there is cheaper stuff than that for pride to drink! Why let it suck the very marrow out of your bones? Be wise! Bow, stoop, *stoop* to be saved! And now, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, the man, the God, I do command you, as His messenger and His servant—and *at your peril reject the command*—“Believe, repent and be baptized, every one of you.” “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved,” “for he who believes and is baptized shall be saved; he who believes not shall be damned.”

God add His blessing, for His name’s sake. Amen.

**375 TEMPLE GLORIES – II CHRON. 5:13-14;
II CHRON. 7:1-3**

A Sermon

**Delivered on Sunday Evening, March 31st, 1861,
by the**

REV. C. H. SPURGEON

At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the LORD, saying, For He is good; for His mercy endures forever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the LORD; so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God.”
— II Chronicles 5:13-14

“Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD’S house. And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped and praised the LORD, saying, For He is good. For His mercy endures forever.” — II Chronicles 7:1-3

IN THE WILDERNESS God showed His glorious presence in the midst of the camp of Israel. To show His secret indwelling in His Church—in the innermost chamber of the

sacred tent, there perpetually beamed the bright and indescribable light of the Shekinah; and to manifest His visible presence to protect and guide His flock, a pillar of cloud covered the people by day, screening them from the burning heat of the sun, so that in that extremely hot and terrible region, they were delivered from excessive heat; and at night, lest they should feel forsaken in the midst of the desolate darkness of the desert, this pillar of cloud became a pillar of fire! There was light throughout all their dwellings, for I suppose that this pillar of fire, like a luminous atmosphere, covered the entire camp. They had thus a sun and a shield. They had light in darkness, and salvation from the heat, their shelter was God's wing, their light gleamed from His eyes. Now, the thought had fallen into the heart of David to build for God a house instead of the tent in which He was willing to dwell, which, by reason of years, had no doubt grown old and somewhat shorn of its glories. He purposed to build a permanent structure. Solomon, his son, carried out the purpose of David. The temple was built. We have no precise idea of the architecture and appearance of this glorious edifice. The two pillars, Jachin and Boaz, are thought by some to have been vast castings of brass, set up in front rather for ornament than service, like the enormous obelisks in the gateways of the Egyptian temples; while others conceive that these renowned columns supported the entablature of the portico; in either case they were stupendous in size, and beautified in the most elaborate manner. The building itself was not large, but exceedingly magnificent. We make a great mistake when we think of Solomon's temple as being famous for size; it was scarcely half as long, and barely half as wide as this present house, or that the area was not one fourth of this which is now crowded with immortal souls. It was 60 cubits long in the clear, which with the most liberal calculation which can be given for the cubit, is but 100 feet, while if the cubit is

half-a-yard, the breadth was but 30 feet. There are hundreds of Christian Churches which excel that marvelous building in mere size. Its chief fame lay in the countless treasures lavished upon it. One of the most reasonable calculations of the expense of that gorgeous structure is 120 million pounds, while other estimates arrive at the inconceivable sum of one billion! The wonder is how they could have used such an amount as even the smaller sum. Whatever it might have been, it would have been a vain-glorious work, unless in that temple there had been the same manifestation of the divine presence as had been given in the tabernacle.

Now, these were two, *the cloud* and *the fire*. The two passages of Scripture which I have read to you give you two pictures. In the first, you have the cloud; in the second, you have the fire; and in these two together, you have the sacred mystic symbols of the presence of the Eternal God in the midst of His people. Oh, that now, tonight, though no visible cloud shall be seen, though no fire shall burn the bullock and the ram, yet may faith discern *the cloud*, and may experience in the heart perceive *the fire*, and may each of us say, “God was with us of a truth;” and add, “Did not our hearts burn within us, while he spoke with us by the way?”

I. The first passage of Scripture, which I read in your hearing, affords me the first head of my discourse. You will perceive that the people were gathered together to praise God. Then, **THE CLOUD** appeared; the priests were no longer able to minister, for God had claimed the great house as being exclusively His own!

Let us note the *occupation* in which they were engaged. They were praising God. Let us mark how they performed this work. You will perceive that they did it *unanimously*. “It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord.” What a

joyous thing it is to hear the thousands praise God at once; every man contributing to the song; the poor coarse voice belonging to some of us who never can learn music, let us try as much as we will; the flute-like voices of our sisters, the deep resounding mellow bass of the full-developed man; all the different tones, and notes, and voices, perhaps expressive of our different degrees and growths in grace, of our different trials, and our different temperaments, all join to swell one common hymn which rolls upward to the throne of God! Every man who refuses to praise God mars the song. Every dumb lip spoils the music. Every silent tongue has a disastrous effect upon the unanimity and oneness of the choir. Let us *all* praise the Lord! Let all creatures that have breath praise Him! Let the heaven of heavens extol Him! We can never expect to have God in this house, or in our own houses, or in our own hearts until we begin to praise Him! Unless as a people, we unanimously, with one heart, though with many tongues, extol the King of kings, farewell to the hope that He will give us His presence in the future! Oh, my dear brothers and sisters let us look back upon the past! Who among us is not a debtor to mercy? “Let those refuse to sing who never knew our God,” and never tasted of His grace! Be silent, O tongue, if you have never tasted of the goodness of the Lord! Breath, be wasted on the air, if your mouth has never been satisfied with good things! But, my soul, if your life is His gift, and your joy His mercy, let no wicked silence bury His praise! He has been so good, so kind, so generous to all of us without exception, that we can and must, each one of us, according to our ability, with heart and voice, praise, laud, and bless His name always!

But then, you perceive they not only sang unanimously, but they shouted *heartily*. In some of our churches, there are half-a-dozen people dressed in white, who stand up to praise the Lord, or rather to magnify the music leader. In many of our dissenting

congregations, some five or six who are the choir sing to the praise and glory of themselves, and the people sit still and listen, not daring to spoil music so magnificent. In many other places, it is thought most seemly to delegate the work of human hearts, and tongues and lips to some instrument which shall praise the Lord. May that never be the case here! As often as we meet together here, may the song roll up to heaven like the voice of many waters, and like great thunders. A little God might deserve little praise, but the great God deserves the great praise of all His creatures! I have noticed that in business, many men show a great deal of energy; but in singing God's praises, they are almost as mute as Matthew's fish! They can listen to the notes, but they do not attempt to join; they have no objection that others should sing, but they are mute themselves. Oh, let us sing to our God! And heartily, too! And if the voice is not as well tuned as we could wish, yet if the *heart* is in tune, God will accept the song, and even angel notes shall not be more acceptable! Fathers love to hear the voices of their own children—why should our heavenly Father have a dumb family?

Mr. Rowland Hill was one day in the pulpit, and an old woman among the crowd got right up to the pulpit steps. She had the art of singing through her nose, and she sung so desperately bad, that good old Rowland turned round and said to her—"Hold your tongue, my good woman; you spoil the singing." "Oh, sir," she said, "it comes from my heart, Mr. Hill. It comes from my heart!" "Sing away, good soul," he said, "sing away as much as ever you like. I am sure I beg your pardon for interrupting you." And so would I say to every man who, in God's house, cannot sing as he would—if it comes from the *heart*, we could not interrupt you, for the very stones would speak if they who fear God and have tasted of His grace did not exalt and extol Him! Well, if you will not praise God in earnest, you must not expect to see *the cloud* of His presence,

for it was when with one heart, with a mighty sound they praised God that the cloud suddenly made its appearance.

Then, notice next, that their praise was *Scriptural praise*. They sung that old psalm, “His mercy endures forever.” Now you, I dare say, thought when I was reading that psalm, there was not much in it. It was a repetition—a monotony; it was striking the same note again and again—ringing the same bell. Well, this just shows that God does not require in our song the display of great poetical ability; He does not need that the verses should have in them flights of rhapsody or dreams of fancy! Let the rhyme be good by all means; let the syllables each have their proper length. God always should have the best of the best; but better is the wild song of the revivalist with the homely street tune, sung from the very soul, than the noblest music that was ever penned, or ever flowed from human lips, if the heart is absent, and if the strain is not in accordance with God’s Word. The more Scriptural our hymns are, the better. In fact, there will never be found music which can excel old David’s Psalms! Let us interpret them in an evangelical spirit; let us fill them full of the gospel of Christ, of which they are, indeed, already full in prophecy, and we shall sing the very words of the Spirit, and shall surely edify each other, and glorify our God! If tonight, then, our music has been Scriptural; if our praise has been hefty; if our song has been unanimous; if we have sung of that mercy which endures forever, we have good cause to expect that God will manifest Himself to us, and faith will perceive the cloud.

That is a grand old Calvinistic Psalm, “*His mercy endures forever*.” What Arminian can sing that? Well, he *will* sing it, I dare say; but if he is a thorough-going Arminian, he really cannot enjoy it and believe it. You can fall from grace, can you? Then, how does His mercy endure forever? Christ bought with His blood some who will be lost in hell, did He? Then, how did His

mercy endure forever? There are some who resist the offers of divine grace, and all that the Spirit of God can do for them, yet disappoint the Spirit and defeat God? How, then, does His mercy endure forever? No, no, this is no hymn for you—this is the Calvinist's hymn! This is the hymn which you and I will sing as long as life shall last, and going through the dark valley of the shadow of death we will make the shades resound with the joyous strain—

“For His mercy shall endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure!”

It was while the people were thus engaged that all of a sudden that cloud which before floated over the tabernacle made its appearance over the temple; but this time, instead of hanging over the roof, it descended and entered into the courts and filled the sacred places! The priests were standing, each of them, in his proper place, swinging to and fro the sacred censers, and making a sweet perfume; others of them were standing at the altar waiting till the time should come for sacrifice. But no sooner did this cloud fill the house than the priests ceased to minister! They felt there was no room for man, for God had filled the place! Brothers and sisters, will you give me your attention while I try to picture to you what shall be the effect if God shall be pleased to fill this house with His glory? I can conceive the effect upon that vast assembly on that august day of the dedication. The glory of God had filled the house, and *the priests were set aside*. Where God is, man is forgotten; you will think little of the minister, save for his work's sake; you will talk the less of the man when you shall see the Master! This house shall cease to be called by my name, and shall be called by God's name! If God shall fill the place, it will be to your souls not the house where you can sit to hear this man or that,

but the place where you shall see the beauty of God, and inquire in His temple. You will love your pastor; you will cherish your elders; you will rally round your deacons; you will, as a Church, recognize the bonds of your Church-relationship— but pastor, elders, deacons, Church—all will be merged and all forgotten if the glory of the Lord shall fill the house! This always has been the effect of great revivals—no man has ever been very apparent. When God blessed the world through Whitefield and Wesley, who were they, and what did they think of themselves? “Less than nothing they became when God was all-in-all!” The going up of priests is the dishonor of the High Priest, Christ Jesus; but when priestcraft ceases to be, and is cast down—then the Lord alone is exalted in that day! May the Lord here, while He uses human instrumentality, let you all see that “It is not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord.”

This has indeed been my mission, to show the power of God in human weakness! I do acknowledge and confess what is so continually said of me, “The man is not educated.” *Granted.* “His periods are unpolished.” *Granted.* “His manner is rough.” *Be it so, if you will.* “He is a fool”—*Yes, amen, and whatever else you choose.* Gather together all the epithets in the catalog of abuse—come heap them here! But who has done *this*, who has saved souls, and called the people to His footstool? Why, if the instrument is mean, the more glory be to Him who used it! And if the man is nothing, “I glory in infirmity that the power of God may rest upon me.” Make me less and less; I pray you do it; let it be so; but still, O God, use this poor ox-goad; make it still mighty to the slaying of Philistines, and make Your Word still a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart! Let the Lord fill the house, and man will be forgotten!

Besides this, you can easily picture in your minds what *a solemn awe fell on all who were gathered that day* when once that cloud had filled the house. Perhaps there were in that vast assembly

some who came there flippantly, to see the edifice. There were some who had heard of its plates of gold; they had heard of its bronze laver; they had listened to the stories of the great stones which Hiram, King of Tyre, had floated on rafts to Joppa, and they came to see the place. There were others, too, who had contributed largely to the building of it; they came to be seen—that the king might thank them for the gift—that the people might see their generous benefactors. These motives, we admit were base, but the motives were lost, and forgotten when once the glory of God filled the house! Then, they felt the place was too solemn to be looked at as a mere display; they thought it, then, too awful to be regarded as their own, and on the breast of every Israelite might have been read these words, “This is none other than the house of God, and the very gate of heaven,” for God had filled the house! Then, too, you may believe right well that *the saints of God rejoiced!* They had sung before; the prayers made sweet melody; but oh, what music was in their souls when once that cloud had covered all! I think they wept for joy! They could not speak. I know I would have been transfixed to that spot. I would have said—

“Come, then, expressive silence;
hymn His praise,”

for oh, when God is present, how can we tell our joys! Sing unto Him, sing unto Him! Praise Him on the cymbals; praise Him on the high-sounding cymbals! But when you have done, all your joy overflows your words—the music of your hearts excels the music of your lips!

And then, I think I may add safely enough, *the suppliants* of that day *felt they might pray more earnestly* because they prayed surely. God had filled the house—now He would hear their prayers! Whenever they turned their eyes to the temple, they

would meet the eyes of God; when for deliverance from sin, pestilence, war, drought, mildew, locusts, or caterpillars, they turned their eyes towards Zion's hill—they felt they must be heard, for God had filled the house. Oh, that tonight the people of God may be glad! Oh, that you may go home as they did from Solomon's temple, blessing the king, each man, in the gladness of heart, and feeling that you may pray, for God *will* hear; that God has so manifestly acknowledged this house as His that whenever we shall meet for supplication, though we are but two or three, where prayer is desired to be made, there Christ is in the midst of us to bless us! I ask, my brothers and sisters, that we may have such a manifestation of God that all these effects, in the very highest and fullest degree, may be received and participated in by us!

I have thus preached upon my first text as briefly as I could, leaving the more time to enforce the lesson of the second. You have sung His praise; now, Lord, fill the house! You have chanted His name; you have lifted up your voices to Him whose mercy endures forever. Oh, King of kings, shine forth! Oh, You who dwells between the cherubim, display Yourself to each of us and do it now, for Jesus' sake!

II. The first text has had reference to the *past*. For mercies received, we must praise God if we would be favored with His presence. The next text dwells especially upon the *future*. The people, after praise, joined with one another in solemn prayer and sacrifice; then was it that **THE FIRE** came down! They had the cloud before, but now they had the fire, and then, once again, they stood up, after having bowed themselves, and they worshipped the Lord and sang once again, "His mercy endures forever."

I have said in this place five or six times already, that unless my Church shall pray for me, and God shall hear their prayers, I am of all men the most miserable, but if your supplications

shall be heard in heaven, I am of all men the most blessed by God! Think of this assembly, repeated as it will be Sabbath after Sabbath—what if we should have no food for the saint—what if the Word should never be spoken earnestly to sinners, and should, therefore, be unblessed? It will be in vain that this house is filled! In *vain* did I say? Infinitely worse than that! Will it be nothing that we are associated together in Churchfellowship. Nothing! It will be everything that shall foretell our future misery unless God is here. It is in vain, the rearing of this structure with all the perseverance that has been used, and with all the smiles of God, unless we have His blessing *now*! If ever you prayed for me, and for this Church before, pray for us seven times now! Oh, you who are my sons and daughters spiritually—who have been born to God by the preaching of the Word—to you I make my first appeal! I beseech you never cease to pray that here God's Word may be a quickening, a convincing, a converting Word. The fact is, brothers and sisters, we must have conversion work here! We cannot go on as some churches do without converts. We cannot, we will not, we must not, we dare not! souls *must* be converted here, and if there are not many born to Christ, may the Lord grant to me that I may sleep in the tomb of my fathers, and be heard of no more. Better, indeed, for us to die than to live if souls are not saved! You, then, who have already been saved under our ministry, make this, I pray you, a matter of daily prayer. You who are members of this Church, who have been long ago in Christ, before our time—I charge you by Him who lives and was dead, be instant in season, and out of season with your constant supplications. O sirs! What shall I do if I have the misfortune to lose my prayer book? And *you* are my prayer book—my litany, my daily prayers are all written on my people's hearts! Where am I? I am like a poor shipwrecked man floating far out at sea upon a raft with no friendly sail in sight,

unless I have your daily prayers. But if I have them, I shall be as some well-laden ship floating in the midst of its convoy with many larger vessels, and fairer sails which keep it gladsome company in storm and in fair weather, till we all shall reach our port together and at once! Pray for us that our faith fail not, that our pride breaks not forth. Pray for *us* that *we* may pray! Pray that we may read the Word with a greater understanding of it, and that when we stand up to speak, a horn of the oil of the Spirit may anoint our head that we may speak the Words of God, and not the words of man. And with your prayers, mingle your sacrifices; bring each day, each one of you, the precious blood of Christ! Take in your hands, handfuls of the frankincense of His merits! Stand each morning and each night before the divine throne as the king's remembrances, putting Him in remembrance of what Jesus did. Plead with Him by *His* agony and bloody sweat, by *His* cross and passion, by *His* precious death and burial. Plead with Him to save souls! Use the strong arguments of Jesus' veins; take to yourselves the Almighty logic of a bleeding Savior's groans; stand to it that you will not let the angel go except He bless you! Back up your prayers with tears! Prove the sincerity of your tears by acts! Live out your prayers. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, and then, work and strive for it. As one man, with one heart, be you daily crying to your God, and seeking by acts of faith to prove the reality of your supplication.

And then, mark you—then shall *the fire* come down! We already have, I trust, the cloud. God this week has acknowledged this house to be His. We need the fire. "But what is the difference?" you ask. Why, there may be the presence of God in a house after a certain fashion, inasmuch as His people there worship Him; but yet it may not be His *active* presence. We need not the cloud—the *symbol* of only His being there in mystery—we *need* the *fire* which is the symbol of

His acting while He is present! Oh, my brothers and sisters, how much the *preacher* needs the fire! He who has the tongue of flame can soon melt hearts, but what are these poor pieces of clay unless God bid the seraph touch them with a live coal from the altar? Preaching is a farce unless the minister has fire within him! And when the fire is there, preaching is God's ordained and guaranteed way of bringing souls to Himself. You have heard preachers, I do not doubt, with erudition so perfect that you could not fathom their meaning. You have heard them with an eloquence so exalted that you could not explain what it was that they would set forth. You have listened to some who rather seemed to have lips of ice than lips of fire; you have heard of many who are successful in giving sleep to those who never sleep at home. There are some preachers who can distribute narcotics with a bounteous hand, and send at one motion of their deadly arm a whole crowd to sleep! May it never be so here! If we cannot keep you awake, it is better ourselves to go to sleep. When the congregation is asleep, it is a sign the minister ought to be in bed—where he could be comfortable—rather than in a pulpit where he is mischievous. But attention may be riveted without feeling being excited. We need *the fire* to make the feeling. Oh, I have heard a man preach a sermon to which an angel might have listened for its faultless truthfulness, but it lacked fire; but I have known another whose ministry was faulty in many respects, rough were his words, the gospel which he preached was not a fullorbed gospel, but yet he spoke like a man who meant what he said, with his heart boiling over at his eyes, with his soul rolling out of his mouth in one tremendous cascade, and men were moved, and the masses flocked, and thousands listened, and souls were saved because the man was in earnest! Ah, when I see a man go up into his pulpit and ask the Lord the Holy Spirit to assist him, and then opens wide his manuscript and *reads* it all—I wonder what he means? And

when he prays that he may have the tongue of fire, and then speaks in such a mumbling cold trivial manner that his hearers detect at once that there is no heart about him—I wonder what he means? Oh, fire of God, come down upon the tongue of the minister! But we need this fire upon the *hearers, too*. How well people listen when they come to hear something! When they come up, and do not expect to get anything, it is not often they are disappointed; but when they are willing to listen to whatever is to be said in God's name, how delightful, how easy, how pleasant it is to address them! We need much of that kind of fire! Oh, how we need the ear that is circumcised—the heart that is softened! The minister is the sower; O God, plow the furrows first! The minister waters; great God, plant the cedar first! We are but the lights; Great God, give the eyes! We are but the trumpets; O Lord, open the ears! We do but speak—great God, give life that when we speak, we may not speak to dead men, but that life may be given through our word! Fire is abundantly needed upon the hearers!

What a noble effect is produced when once the fire comes down upon a congregation! I will picture you a Church without fire, and then one with it. There is a chapel—we will not say where—anywhere you like. On Sabbath morning, the minister enters his place; he hardly expects to see it half full. He comes in about five minutes late. He gives out the hymn—two or three singers rise up and slaughter the praise. The people keep dropping in all through the hymn. Prayer begins, and they are still dropping in. The chapter has been read, and the second hymn going on; they are still coming in. At last, they have got quietly settled. The clerk has just finished the last verse; he composes himself to his usual sleep; the congregation also prepare themselves for what they are about to receive. Firstly, has produced its effect; secondly, is telling upon the people very manifestly; and by the time that thirdly has been given out,

[three sermon points] perhaps the last pair of eyes will have ceased to gaze upon the pulpit and the vacant face within it! But as you stand in the aisle, you say to yourself, “Well, this is a sight indeed! That is a good man in the pulpit, but what right has he *there*?” These are good people, but what do they come *here* for? There is no earnestness, no life.” The notices have to be given out—“Prayer meeting on Monday evening; lecture on Thursday.” Well, we will come on Monday evening. So we go. There is the minister and about four people besides us. There are hardly enough to ask to pray; after one has prayed, the minister will have to pray twice to make up the time; the prayers are 20 minutes long—they are not prayers, they are sermons. If anything, the prayer meeting is duller than the service, for there were people at the one, if no life; but here, there are neither people nor life! Well, we will go and speak to the deacons. “Well, friend, how has your Church increased of late?” “Well, sir, we do not increase; we have not looked to that lately; but sir, things are very well; we are going on very comfortably.” “How long since you have had a baptizing?” “Oh, we had a baptizing in old Dr. So-and-So’s time. That is about, I think—let me see—fifteen years ago, I think.” “You have not had one since?” “Well, I do not know; we may have had one. We have had some members join from other Churches, but we certainly have not had many.” “And are you doing anything in the neighborhood for good?” “Well, no. We have some young people who are a little too rash and hasty; they will not be quite quiet; but our minister does not think there is any use in going out of the old ways. Besides, he says revivals are all wildfire—that the Lord will certainly have His own, and that we ought not to exert ourselves beyond the proper limit. You know, he says that ministers who preach too often, always die prematurely. Our minister wants to live to a good old age, and therefore he is careful of his valuable life.” We will go and see

the minister now. We will ask him to let us into the study. Sets of manuscripts—a bad sign! Shelves full of sermons, and very little Puritan theology. Bad sign again. I wonder whether he will let us stop by while he is making a sermon. The way to begin to make a sermon is to bend the knees and to cry to God for direction; that is the first point. He does not do that; he has marked 20 or 30 texts for the next month or two, and he has had a bill printed, and told the people what he means to preach from, to prove that he is guided by the Spirit for months in advance, and not in the same hour when he needs it! So he looks to see what the text is, and takes down various books that he has upon the subject, writes out his epistle to his church and the thing is done, and he may go out visiting. No groaning over souls, mark; none of Baxter's compassion; no knocking of the knees together as he goes up the pulpit stairs; no sleepless nights because he cannot preach as he would; no groaning when he comes home because he thinks there has been a failure where there ought to have been a success. No; the reason is because there is no fire. O God! Send down the fire and what a change there will be!

The fire has come. The next Saturday the minister is in his study again, and the thought—an awful thought—strikes him, "What if the blood of souls should be at my door?" He gets up. He paces the room; puts his hand upon his forehead; he had never thought of that before! Preaching these years, but he never thought he was responsible for men—never imagined that he must certainly be either his brother's keeper, or his brother's murderer! He cannot stand it. That discourse he was going to deliver will not do; he will take another. A text comes to his mind; it shall be this—"Ho, everyone who thirsts, come you to the waters!" When he wakes on Sabbath morning, he is all in fear—Suppose he should break down? He lifts up his heart to God; he prays for help. He goes up into the pulpit; he

is trembling. He begins to speak; the people do not know what to make of it—the minister is different from anything he was before! He begins to speak to everyone who thirsts, and now he begins to cry, “Ho!” He never spoke as loud as that before! Now he begins to plead, “Come you to the waters!” They never saw him stretch his hands out to plead before. “And he who has no money, come, buy wine and milk.” And the tears roll down his cheeks, and he begins to plead with all the pathos of his nature while he begs souls to come to Christ, to come to Christ, to come to Christ! The old sleepers find they cannot sleep; those who have had the most comfortable nap before, cannot effect it now. Eyes gleam—rays flash from many eyeballs which had for months been unconscious of a sympathetic glance; tears are seen! The minister pleads with God after he has pleaded with men; he comes down to the vestry. The old deacon takes hold of both his hands—“Bless God for such a sermon as this, sir; it has quite stirred me up; this is how old Dr. So-and-So used to preach.” And the next deacon says, “I bless God for this! Don’t you think we ought to have a special prayer meeting about it? Better give notice of it this evening.” Prayer meeting next Monday. There are not many, but there are four times as many as there were before; and oh, how they pray! Twenty minutes does not do; they pray 10 minutes each; they keep to the point; they do not preach; they pray for God to bless the minister. Next Sabbath morning, a fuller house; Sabbath evening, crowded; souls are awakened, God is blessing the Word—saints pray, sinners tremble; the neighborhood is changed, and Christ is glorified! This is the effect of the fire. O God, send the fire here!

But, you will perceive, it is said that the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord because the glory of the Lord filled the house. The first time the priests could do nothing, but they stopped where they were. The second time, they had to be

more forgotten still, for they could not stay in the house. Let God send the fire of His Spirit here, and the minister will be more and more lost in His Master; you will come to think less of the speaker, and more of the truth of God spoken; the individual will be swamped; the words spoken will rise above everything! When you have the cloud, the man is forgotten; when you have the fire, the man is lost, and you only see his Master! Suppose the fire should come here and the Master be seen more than the minister—what then? Why, this Church will become two, or three, or four thousand strong! It's easy enough in God to double our numbers, vast though they are. We shall have the lecture hall beneath this platform crowded at each prayer meeting, and we shall see in this place young men devoting themselves to God; we shall find young ministers raised up and trained, and sent forth to carry the fire to other parts! Japan, China, and India shall have heralds of the cross who have here had their tongues touched with the flame! The whole earth shall receive benedictions! If God shall bless us, He will make us a blessing unto all! Let but God send down the fire, and the biggest sinners in the neighborhood will be converted; those who live in the dens of infamy will be changed; the drunk will forsake his cups, the swearer will repent his blasphemy, the debauched will leave their lusts—

“Dry bones be raised and clothed afresh,
And hearts of stone be turned to flesh!”

If there is anywhere within these walls tonight, a man who has not been within a place of worship for these last 20 years; if there are others who have forfeited all claim to honor, and all title to respect, Great God, make these the first-fruits of Your power! Make them instances of Your mercy, trophies of Your grace! This will be the effect of that fire which of old consumed

the sacrifice, and which today consumes our sins, and fires our works, our songs, our prayers, till all smoke up to heaven, and God accepts them as an offering of a sweet smell.

I shall not detain you longer, having thus set before your mind's eye the two things for which we should earnestly seek, and for which we should cry to God. I shall close by simply preaching the gospel, and I do not think that on this first occasion I can do it better than by simply telling the story of how I was brought to Christ myself. I had been for years as a child in secret the prey of the most desponding feelings. One thought had crushed me. I was a sinner, and God was angry with the wicked every day. I began to pray, but prayer gave me no comfort; it only made my burden heavier. I read the Bible; the Bible was full of threats to me; I could find no promises there. I attended the house of God constantly, but I never knew from all the preaching that I heard what I must do to be saved; my eyes were blind and my soul ignorant. I heard a practical preacher, but what was the use of practice? It was like teaching a man to march who had no feet! I heard the law thundered, but it was not thunder that I needed, but notes of mercy. I hope that no creature ever had more intense and awful sorrow of heart than I under conviction of sin—feelings which I strived to conceal from all—and I was thought to be dull and idle because I had little heart for anything. As I have said before, I prayed daily and constantly, but my groans seemed to be reverberated from a bronze heaven, and God gave no mercy to me. It might have been so to this day if it had not been for the purpose and providence of God which prevented me from going to my usual place of worship, and compelled me to turn into a little Primitive Methodist chapel. Now that day was so snowy that there were very few people there, and the minister did not come; I think he was snowed up. But they found out some poor man, a local preacher, and he was put into the pulpit.

Blessed be God! Blessed be God for that poor local preacher. He read his text. It was as much as he could do. The text was, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” He was an ignorant man, he could not say much; he was obliged to keep to his text. Thank God for that. He began, “*Look!!*” That is not hard work. You need not lift your hands; you do not need to lift your fingers. *Look!* A fool can do that! It does not need a wise man to look. A child can do that! You don’t need to be full grown to use your eyes. *Look!* A poor man may do that, no need of riches to look. *Look*—how simple—how simple.” Then he went on, “Look unto Me. Do not look to yourselves, but look to Me, that is, Christ. Do not look to God the Father to know whether you are elected or not, you shall find that out afterwards, look to Me. Look to Christ. Do not look to God the Holy Spirit to know whether He has called you or not. That you shall discover by-and-by. Look unto Jesus Christ.” And then he went on in his own simple way to put it thus—“Look unto *Me*. I am sweating great drops of blood for you. Look unto Me. I am scourged, and spit upon. I am nailed to the cross. I die. I am buried. I rise and ascend. I am pleading before the Father’s throne, and all this for *you*.”

Now, that simple way of putting the gospel had enlisted my attention, and a ray of light had poured into my heart! Stooping down, he looked under the gallery and said—“Young man, you are very miserable.” So I was, but I had not been accustomed to be addressed in that way. “Ah,” he said, “and you will always be miserable if you don’t do as my text tells you. That is, look unto Christ.” And then, he called out, with all his might, “Young man, look! In God’s name, look and look now!” I did look, blessed be God! I know I looked then and there; and he who but that minute ago had been near despair, had the fullness of joy and hope! And that instant, he who was ready to destroy himself, could have stood up then and there to—“Sing

of Him whose pardoning blood had washed sins away.” And now, here I stand to preach in this great building the same gospel in the same simple tones. Sinners, look to Christ and be saved—

“Ever since by faith I saw the stream,
His flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.”

Oh, sinners! What if God should make this your spiritual birthday? And it can only be thus by your simply looking to Christ! Yes, by the prayers of an earnest wife, I beg you look. Oh, young man! By the groans of a loving mother, I beg you care for your soul and look! Yes, old man! By the decline of years, and by those gray hairs, and the nearness of your grave, I pray you look! Yes, you sons of poverty, by all that you have to suffer here, look, look to Jesus, that you may find in Him eternal riches! And you rich men, if you would not be cursed by your riches, look and find the healing for the diseases of this life! To one and all is the Word of this salvation sent—“He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; he who believes not shall be damned.” “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house.”

376 MEETING OF OUR LONDON BAPTIST BRETHREN

Tuesday, April 2nd, 1861,
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

Sir Morton Peto in the Chair

A noble assembly having filled the house, after singing, the Rev. C. H. SPURGEON offered prayer.

REV. C. H. SPURGEON—In inviting our Baptist brethren to meet together this evening, it was in the hope that something might be suggested which might promote our success as a united body, and that words of encouragement from comrades in the same regiment might gladden all hearts; we offer the heartiest welcome to our beloved friends—this chapel belongs not to me nor to my Church specially, but to all the Baptist denomination! I feel tonight as if I were rendering up the trust deeds to the proper proprietors—acknowledging that this house belongs not to any man, but, first, to the God of the whole world, and, next, to those who hold the pure primitive ancient apostolic faith. We believe that the Baptists are the original Christians. We did not commence our existence at the Reformation, we were Reformers before Luther or Calvin were born; we never came from the Church of Rome, for we were never in it. We have an unbroken line up to the apostles themselves! We have always existed from the very days of Christ, and our principles, sometimes veiled and forgotten like a river which may travel underground for a little season, have always had honest and holy adherents. Persecuted alike by

Romanists and Protestants of almost every sect, yet there has never existed a Government holding Baptist principles which persecuted others; nor, I believe, any body of Baptists ever held it to be right to put the consciences of others under the control of man. We have ever been ready to suffer as our martyrologies will prove, but we are not ready to accept any help from the State to prostitute the purity of the Bride of Christ to any alliance with Government! And we will never make the Church, although the Queen, the despot over the consciences of men. I will now resign the meeting to my esteemed friend, Sir Morton Peto, who has many a stone in this building, and who, I trust, will honor us with his presence on many future occasions.

The CHAIRMAN—My dear Christian friends—when invited to lay the first stone of this building, I deemed it a high honor and privilege. To be asked to preside tonight at the meeting of the Baptist brethren of the metropolis, I deem also to be an honor and a privilege. Let me say at once how much I sympathize with all of you in meeting in this magnificent building tonight, under circumstances of the most gratifying character, without anything to allay or diminish our joy and thankfulness to God. I recollect having said when the first stone was laid, that I saw no reason why this building should not be opened free from debt, and what has just fallen from your esteemed pastor has shown how that anticipation has been abundantly realized! In meeting my Baptist brethren for the first time in this building, my thoughts naturally recur for a moment to the past. Mr. Spurgeon has spoken of our history, of our martyrologies, and the sufferings of our forefathers. They have labored; we have entered into their labors. The result of that is shown in the ability of God's people connected with our denomination to raise a temple like this to His praise; and we have to acknowledge how much we owe to our forefathers

in the opportunity we have of giving as a privilege, not as an exaction, and in seeing such a result of giving as this edifice displays. There are many grounds on which we rejoice with our friend—the first and greatest of all is that which was referred to in the text on the evening of the opening day—“Christ is preached and therein do I rejoice; yes, and I will rejoice.” In the sermon of the afternoon, to which that of the evening seemed a graceful and fitting pendant, your pastor said that with all the misconceptions entertained with regard to his ministry, there was one point about which there could be no misconception—he thanked God he could say from his heart he had simply preached Christ. Now I believe the evidence we have in this building is no mean one that he has preached Christ—because if ministers have recourse to what they deem intellectual or philosophical preaching, or any other than that of preaching Christ, we soon find in our denomination empty pews show the result! There is an underlying stratum in the deep feelings and hearts of our countrymen of reverence and love for the old gospel which nothing else can supplant. The great strength of this country is that, whatever may be written or said, the people at once refer to the law and to the testimony, and that which is not found written there has no place in their reverence or their esteem!

The next cause we have for rejoicing is the feeling that the privilege we have of worshipping God according to our consciences in this and every other edifice connected with His praise is to be traced to the result of the sufferings of our forefathers. But that privilege has entailed on us an adequate responsibility. In reading the writings of the Puritan Fathers, I am struck to see how deeply they were impressed with the principles on which they acted. They were not Nonconformists because their fathers were; they would themselves have gone to the stake to assert the principles connected with the

Headship and the position of the Great Head of the Church in the sole right of sovereignty within that Church. In the present day there is entailed on us a great responsibility in guarding tenderly and carefully these privileges. There is not only a desire on the part of the State to keep the Church so-called allied to the State, but to put in the thin end of the wedge and intermeddle with other denominations. If we find the Church as we understand it, in the slightest degree interfered with, we must as one man arise and say we will never allow the privilege of the Headship of the Great Head of the Church to be interfered with by any State in existence—all honor to the Queen! No one can say more fervently than the Baptists, “God save the Queen,” but while we render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, we must have respect to the commandment which enforces that nothing of Caesar’s shall touch that which is God’s. We—the members of other Baptist churches, congratulate with all our hearts the pastor, deacons, and members of this Church on the accomplishment of this great work, without any feeling excepting that of devout thankfulness to God for what He has enabled them to achieve! And we desire that abundant success may attend the proclamation of the gospel in this building. Long may the pastor be spared to minister to a devoted, loving, and affectionate people! Long may he be surrounded by deacons who are able and willing to take the stroke oar in all the labors that appertain to them in connection with the secular affairs of the church; long may he see this place too narrow for even the communicants who assemble as his church members, and long may he have the power of the Holy Spirit attending an effective ministry and witnessing every month in that baptismery to the result of his labors! That which does not bring souls to Christ is worth nothing!

Among Evangelical bodies, especially our own denomination, there may be slight differences, and will be among men who think for themselves—yet in the great fundamental and vital truths of godliness, there exists no difference among us, and we only rejoice in so far as our ministry is made effectual in the way I have mentioned. Look at the influences which will go forth from this Church—look at the schools brought together here, and the children instructed in the knowledge of God and Christ! Look at the evangelical labors of the brethren who constitute the Church in the surrounding districts, teaching and preaching Christ! Mr. Spurgeon will not conceive that his members, when they have simply attended here on the Sabbath, and partaken of the Lord's Supper, have done their duty, but will feel that they must become living Epistles of Christ, known and read of all men! And then, while we shall no doubt consistently maintain that great truth which we feel has been committed to us, we shall live in harmony with all those who hold the great, vital truths of godliness. One cannot but feel a most anxious desire and hope that long after our brother is called to the upper sanctuary, his place may be filled in generations to come by those who, like he, will lead their hearers constantly to Christ, and that this will not only be a monument to the praise of God in our own generation, but in many generations following! What a splendid monument is this building to the voluntary principle! When I am in the House of Commons, I am continually told on the Church-rate question, "Oh, but the rural districts." Well, if my friend Mr. Spurgeon can raise during 18 months throughout the country a sum of money to erect this edifice, do you think that the State Church need be so anxious about the rural districts? One could not desire a better thing than that those members of Parliament who are so afflicted for fear the country churches should fall down, should come and see what has been

raised here! This edifice tells—and may it long tell—the world at large that when people are imbued with all their heart and soul with the love of Christ, and feel that their great end is to live to Him, there is no fear of their allowing the House of God to fall about their ears! And when anything ceases to be a church which so holds the sympathies and hearts of the people, if the church falls down, I pity the church, I pity the people, I pity the denomination!

Three years ago I called the attention of the House of Commons to the fact that the natives of Calcutta had spent more money in one year in the erection and sustaining of their heathen temples, than the whole amount of the church-rates of this country collected during the previous year! I then asked this question, “Is your religion not of a character to take a more vital hold on your hearts than the religion of Hinduism? Shall it be said that the Son of God became incarnate and died in this world, and left as His legacy to His loving disciples the propagation of His truth, and they can only support the edifices in which that glorious name is praised by exacting from their fellow men that which shall sustain them?” Our friends have done nobly in asserting what can be done on the voluntary principle, and if anyone points me in future to the rural districts with regard to the church-rates or anything of this kind, I shall, among other things, point to this place, and say, “See what the Baptist denomination in the person of our friend and his church have done, and do not insult me by imagining that I think Christian principles require such support as you would give it.” We do rejoice with you most heartily, genuinely, and lovingly tonight. I have told you the grounds on which we rejoice. It is not a mere sentiment, a mere effervescent feeling, but that true bond of brotherhood kindled in the heart by love to the same Savior, by adopting as we do from sincere conviction those truths which we hold to be vital and necessary.

It is to the assertion of those truths that we desire to see not only this, but every edifice in connection with our denomination, so that in regard to all our churches and their pastors, there may be no doubt that they act from one principle—a love to Christ and a desire to follow Him—for it is in following Him, alone, that they honor Him!

Rev. J. H. HINTON—I am happy in being permitted to take a part in the services connected with the opening of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, and in having the opportunity of saying, in the terms of the invitation of my brother Spurgeon, “a few kind words.” Kind words are, indeed, easy of utterance when the heart is kind, and my heart is kind towards my brother and has been so from my earliest acquaintance with him! Let Mr. Spurgeon, then, and his friends accept my warmest congratulations and best wishes! Long may the life be spared which is so devotedly and laboriously spent; the intellectual powers which acquire and supply so large an amount of Evangelical truth; and the magnificent voice which, with so much facility, pours it into the ears of listening thousands! As no resolution or topic has been put into my hands, I will take one as presenting to us a collateral aspect of the great doctrine of the influence of the Holy Spirit—an influence blessed and divine, wherein lies the entire success of the Evangelical ministry. It is said of our Lord that, “God gave not the Spirit by measure unto Him.” Undoubtedly, the absolute fullness of the Holy Spirit rested on Jesus; He was capable of receiving it all, and His great work required it all. But we get here the idea of the Spirit being communicated “by measure”—to some persons, and on some occasions, more—to others, less. It is natural that this should be so, the bestowment of that divine influence being an act of sovereign grace; the history of the progress of Christianity presents many illustrations of the fact. The Holy Spirit was poured out in a comparatively small

measure during the life and ministry of our Lord. Of all preachers of the gospel, He may be said to have been the least successful in the conversion of men—not absolutely unsuccessful, but successful in the smallest degree as to the number of conversions. There were doubtless, fit reasons for this—the time was not then, nor the circumstances in which a very copious effusion of the Holy Spirit's influence could fitly have been given. You know how copiously the Spirit was poured out after the ascension of Christ. In subsequent ages the changes have been manifest. If the Spirit had continued to be poured out as it were on the day of Pentecost, I imagine that long before this time the whole world would have been converted to God. We know what took place in the Middle Ages; that, when the Man of Sin was to be revealed and Popery established; the influences of the Spirit were restrained—not absolutely, but communicated in small measure. At the time of the Reformation a large outpouring of the Spirit was given; at successive periods, and in various parts of the world, as in America, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Jamaica, Sweden and elsewhere, at periods of no certain recurrence, and for durations of time not definite, but yet in extraordinary degree as compared with other times and places, the Spirit has been poured out. The present seems to me to be a dispensation in which the Spirit is communicated “by measure,” and in a measure determined by divine sovereignty and wisdom; a measure incorporated with and subordinated to the development of God's own plan, and the opportunities to be supplied for the manifestation of man's and the devil's corruption. Since we live under this dispensation, a question of practical interest to ourselves is this—what is the kind of measure, the amount according to which the influence of the Spirit is poured out now? Thank God, it is not absolutely withheld, otherwise there would be no conversions at all under

the ministry of the gospel, and even a proclaimed Savior would be a Savior universally trampled on and despised! That it is not the outpouring of the Spirit in its fullness is tangible from the fact that, amid such multiplied privileges, such vast and multiform activities for the dissemination of the truth, so few comparatively are converted to God. The majority, even of gospel hearers, is probably unconverted—the entire population scarcely touched—and when we consider not only how many people are now alive, but how fast people are born and die, the small number of conversions takes a character still more striking! At this rate it appears to me quite certain that the conversion of the world would never come. To accomplish it there must be a much larger outpouring of the Spirit than there now is. Then, in connection with this, a much larger supply of the influences of the Holy Spirit may be had; the abundant supply lies in the hands of Christ! It is not that all is done that can be done; a very great deal more can be done; a power remains by which the whole world may be rapidly subdued to God! This may be done any time, anywhere— this moment, next year—whenever and wherever God pleases. It waits for the arrival of the appointed time given for the development of human corruption, and the time when the Man of Sin is to die. Whether the Church is awake or asleep—whether there is prayer or no prayer—whether there is activity or no activity—it matters not. It must come, and perhaps it will come like a heavy, copious shower to wake us all up from sleep, and to set us on an activity such as we have never entered on before! At the same time it may have, and probably will have its antecedent and accompanying signs. Very likely it may be a time when there is much prayer and activity—when there is much depression and agony of heart—when the Church humbles itself in unknown throes of sorrow for a declining work of grace. Nobody knows when, nor how. We have to pray

for it, to wait for it, to hope for it, to look for it, as some people say they look for Christ's second coming. We do not know when it comes; I only say, sir, God grant it may be here, and grant it may be now!

The REV. ALFRED C. THOMAS said he could scarcely feel himself worthy of the name of a Christian, certainly not of a Baptist, if he could not rejoice in their Metropolitan Tabernacle, and express his hearty thanks to God for the accomplishment of its erection. He had been asked to say something upon the fact that the Baptists as a denomination were distinguished for maintaining the nullity of ordinances without faith—a point that might be well sustained by reference to the history of their denomination. They had never regarded anything external or ceremonial as worth a rush, except as inspired by faith in Christ, who alone could sanction with His presence and fill with His blessing, the ordinances that set Him forth, and told to the world the great truths of His gospel. In order to sustain that, he purposed to read to them extracts from their confessions of faith set forth in the 17th Century. Those confessions were not made with a view to bring the minds of men under a servile sway, but to convey to others what in their estimation the mind and will of Christ was as revealed in His Scriptures. They had never sought, as it had been affirmed, to force them upon any set of men; they had never gone to any temporal power to ask the shield of its authority for the maintenance or the right of proclaiming them. Nevertheless, there had been times in their history when they had felt it necessary to put forward explanations of their faith in Christ. In the confession of faith put forth by the General Baptists in 1611, the Tenth article was as follows—"That the Church of Christ is a company of faithful people, separated from the world by the Word and the Spirit of God, being knit unto the Lord and unto one another by baptism upon their own

confession of faith and sin.” In the 39th article of a confession put forth in 1646, by “seven congregations in London, commonly but unjustly called Anabaptists,” they said, “Baptism is an ordinance of the New Testament given by Christ to be dispensed upon persons professing faith, or that are made disciples, who upon profession of faith ought to be baptized, and after to partake of the Lord’s Supper.” That would suit their strict Baptist brethren to the letter. In 1656, another confession maintained the same forms of faith. He would read one given in 1660, which was rather more strong than some of the rest. It was, “That the right and only way of gathering churches according to Christ’s appointment, is first to preach the gospel to the sons and daughters of men, and then to baptize in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, such only of them as profess repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. And as for all such who preach not this doctrine, but instead thereof the Scriptureless thing of sprinkling of infants, (falsely called baptism), whereby the pure Word of God is made of no effect, and the New Testament way of bringing members into the church by regeneration, is cast out, when, as the bond-woman and her son—that is to say, the Old Testament way of bringing in children into the church by regeneration, is cast out, as says the Scripture, all such, we utterly deny, forasmuch as we are commanded to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather to reprove them.” That, he thought, was strong enough for any Baptist!

Another confession put forth by the elders and deacons of many congregations in London and the adjacent counties, 1688, stated in the 29th article, “Baptism is an ordinance of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ to be unto the party baptized a sign of his fellowship with Christ in His death and resurrection; of his being engrafted into Him, of remission of

sin, and of his giving up himself unto God through Jesus Christ, to live and to walk with Him in newness of life. Those who do actually profess repentance towards God, and faith in and obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ, are the only proper subject of this ordinance. The outward element to be used in this ordinance is water, wherein the party is to be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Immersion, or the dipping of the person in water, is necessary to the due administration of this ordinance.” Those were confessions of faith in which they as heartily agreed that day, as their fathers had in every age of the Church. That amounted to a historical and unquestionable fact; but how were the Baptists entitled to say that they were the only denomination who had always maintained the nullity of religious ordinances without faith, and especially on the vexed subject of baptism? Two religious sections—the Papists and Episcopalians—maintained the requisiteness of sponsors, and baptized children upon the faith of the sponsors. Their Presbyterian and many of their Congregational or Independent brethren baptized infants upon the supposition of there being some covenant between God and the believing parent together with his children. It was assumed that there was a faith in the parents, but it was a proxy faith. Others, like Dr. Halley, threw this altogether overboard, and did not charge baptism with the requisition of faith at all, either in the infant, the parents, or relatives. The Baptists believed that that which was without faith was sin. That of course was a truth of God in religion, but it was equally a truth of God in many other things! A worship which did not recognize God lacked that element of faith. The service they gave to their Master— given without faith in His right to receive it, in His authority to command it, in His gracious acceptance of it—was not an act of religiousness to Jesus! Christ came to build up a kingdom among men. Was it a

national kingdom? Did He not come to overthrow it in the form of its nationality? Did He come to set up and maintain a kingdom of combined spiritual and unspiritual elements—to put the gold and the miry clay together? Or did He come to say that they should be henceforth separated—that He would cause them to be refined, and accept that which rendered to Him spiritual services alone? In that kingdom Christ was the only Redeemer, the only lawgiver; there were none united to Him who were not united to Him by faith. They, only, who saw Him as the Crucified, and pursued Him with the same simple faith to His throne, were the subjects of His kingdom, whatever their name among men! In that kingdom there were ordinances; Christ only had a right to appoint them, and without faith in Him as their King, how could they accept them? In that kingdom all the subjects were distinguished from the rest of the world as believers; that was their great distinction as separated from the world whose chief characteristic was *unbelief*. But then, were those ordinances of Christ's appointment purely tests of their fidelity to Him, or were they expressions of His loving will for His children—were they exhibitions of His love, or mere mandates of His authority? “If you love Me, keep My commandments, and you who do not love Me have not even to do with My commandments. You not only have no part in My righteousness; you have not to touch My commandments.” He could not be served as a King who had not been trusted as the Great High Priest and Apostle of their profession! He would not allow them to lift up His ordinances, maintain His precepts, and advance His kingdom unless they had enshrined Him as the one offering for sinners in their heart's affection and trust! The ordinances were given as symbols of Himself, and when the minister went down with his candidates to the baptismal font, they would see there as eloquent an exposition of Christ's gospel as they would ever hear from the platform

on which he stood! He (Mr. Thomas) never administered the ordinance without wishing he could preach as effectively and eloquently what Christ was, and what He had done for men, as that ordinance set the gospel forth. Did not Christ say to them, “I ordain these ordinances as proofs to you of My love; I give you once in your life at least the opportunity of saying to all who are witnesses, ‘I deserve to die eternally; I build my hopes for escaping that eternal death on Jesus and Jesus only’”? Once in their life at least, though they had a stammering tongue, they could tell to thousands that witnessed their baptism, that this was the basis of their faith. “Union to Christ” would be the echo of that font whenever its waters were disturbed! “Nothing but His death avails me as a sinner; my hopes were brightened when He rose from the dead and, as He lives and reigns, nothing can cloud them.” And when they passed on from that ordinance to the table of the Lord, did they say anything very different? They said in their baptism that they had come into possession of life by faith in the Savior who died—and when they participated in the memorials of His death, what did they say but that whereas they had life only by union with Him, they could live only by ceaseless union with Him? Hence, the next and permanent ordinance was a meal, to show that as they sustained bodily nature by food and drink, so they had no life in them except they ate His flesh and drank His blood! With such convictions they would set forth, each one for himself, as a unit of a denomination, that they had no faith in ordinances that did not require faith in their subjects—faith in Him who ordained them!

The Rev. C. H. SPURGEON—I have several things I want to say now that a great many Baptist brethren are gathered here. The first is, let me earnestly entreat all my brothers and sisters to back up our Chairman in a bill which he has introduced into the House with regard to the burial of

unbaptized persons. I hope that all of you read the Baptist Magazine—you certainly ought to do so. I will not say that there is any improvement on the past—I can only say it is the aim of the editors to still make improvements, and to make it more worthy of the denomination of which it is the representative. In that magazine you may have read Sir Morton's speech, which is there embalmed in amber. There is a clergyman in Newton Flottman (I do not know whether the place is as dark as Timbaktu), who has actually been carrying away the mold from his churchyard to put it on his parish land. This mold was composed of bones of the dead, an entire skull having been found in it, and a complaint was made to the clergyman, who very coolly said, "Well, but that was the corner of the church yard where they buried Baptists, Methodists, and other dissenters;" and therefore I suppose he thought it was the best thing to do to make some use of them after they were dead! If my bones shall ever by any ill fortune come into an Episcopalian churchyard, I hope they will be used in the same way, for I should like to be of use as long as ever there is an atom of me in existence! Sir Morton is introducing a bill into Parliament to compel clergymen to allow all, indiscriminately, to be buried in the church yard. It seems to be a very hard thing, indeed, that we are to pay to keep their churches up, and yet they will not allow us a tomb! The nation lends to the Episcopalian denomination, the national edifices—surely if they will not be generous enough to pay their own repairs—they might permit us to use the national graveyard in common with themselves! At present, in the dead of night, we are put up in a corner where the nettles grow. I have buried people in country church yards, and if I had time, I would go and do it in every churchyard, and defy anyone who dared do it, to use the law against me! If laws cannot be altered, they can be defied. It is abominable that any sect of Christians should have the

opportunity of becoming obnoxious to their brethren by fighting over the coffin of a dead child! I am as heartily at one with the Evangelicals of the Church of England as any man that lives; some of my dearest friends are members of that body, and it is a pity that they should be put in a position where they can insult the feelings of Christians by refusing to bury our dead. Let us put them out of harm's way; let every Baptist congregation send up a petition, a form of which they will find in the Baptist Magazine; let us show that Sir Morton does not represent a slender handful of men, who are inactive, but a Christian body who feel if they are to be insulted, it shall not be their fault if they do not remove the stumbling block out of their brothers' way!

I have a project on hand for which I want to engage your sympathies. The incomes of most Baptist ministers are so miserably small that they are not able to buy books. It would do all our country brothers good to read more Puritan theology, and have the opportunity of stocking their libraries better. I have long had this project on my mind, and some time ago I asked Mr. Nichol, an eminent publisher in Edinburgh who brought out a series of the British Poets at a cheap rate, whether, if I could get some Presbyterians and Independents to back up the scheme, and spoke myself to my Baptist brethren, he could not reprint much of our standard divinity at a cheap rate. There will be six magnificent volumes each year for a guinea. One hundred thousand copies at the very least must be sold before he will be able to see any profit at all; and what I have to propose is that every Baptist Church throughout the country should devote one guinea at least each year to provide a library which shall permanently belong to the Church, so that in the course of 100 years, there would be a splendid mass of old divinity stored away which would be read by coming generations. Some time ago I offered my deacons all the books

I had, to start a library here for the use of future ministers. They did not wish me to do that, but we shall seek to get such a library that any minister after me may find a well-stored granary at hand! If all our churches do the same, and spend their money this year in backing up the admirable scheme of Mr. Heaton by purchasing the four volumes setting forth Baptist views, they will have the first installment, to which they can add, little by little, in successive years, and thus confer a gift on the denomination second to none! Then again I should like to say a good word for the iron chapel movement. I wish some of them could be bought and moved about from place to place, although for permanent buildings, I have no faith in them. They are dreadfully cold in winter, and they are frightfully hot in summer, but they may be put up very cheaply, and attempts may in this way be made to increase the number of our churches in this city. I have been the means of opening two new churches within the last 18 months, and I hope to start some more. I wish we could as a body commence fresh places, and give our services for six months, taking it in turn until we worked the place up. I do not think there is the slightest reason why we should not double our number in the next two years; it seems to me that we have got such a real hold upon the public mind that we only need to bring our principles out. I know they will say that we are getting desperately Baptist—we must be—we shall never tell until we do; we must hold inviolable the essential union of the Church; we must stand to it that all God's people are one in Him—but why should we lower our standard any more than any other denomination? What is there about baptism that we should be ashamed of it? What is there about the history of our Church, the power of our ministers, our poets and divines that we should be ashamed of? When we know that we have borne the palm in poetry with Milton, in allegory with John Bunyan, and stand second to none in the

ministry with Robert Hall, I think we have no reason whatever to be ashamed! Let us come straight out determined that we will restrain no part of the truth of God! I am glad that we have here brothers representing different views among us. Here am I a strict Baptist, and open communion in principle; some of our brothers are strict in communion, and strict in discipline; some are neither strict in discipline nor in communion. I think I am nearest right of any, but you all think the same of yourselves, and *may God defend the right!*

Mr. DICKERSON said he had been much struck with the surprising contrast of circumstances between the original formation of that Church and the present moment, and if he knew how, he would deliver a capital speech upon the words, “Then,” and, “Now.” “Then,” when the Church was originally formed, they were not permitted to have a chapel. “Now,” they were not only permitted to have a chapel, but a splendid place which they called a, “Tabernacle.” When passing the building, he had tried the several points of resemblance in his own mind, to reconcile his thoughts to its being called a Tabernacle, that is—a temporary building, to be removed to different places. He supposed that was not meant, but he hoped it might always continue to be a Tabernacle, where God should dwell with men—that He who tabernacled among men might by the embodiment of His Spirit in the ministry, tabernacle with His people, and bless them with an abundant blessing. He looked upon the Church as having been formed in the year 1662. Their second pastor, in 1664, suffered persecution, imprisonment and the stocks. Benjamin Keach in that year wrote a book, called “A Child’s Primer,” which was deemed schismatic and wicked. He was tried at the Aylesbury Assizes in 1666, before Lord Clarendon, who, in a most wanton manner, browbeat the poor man, told the jury he should send a fellow before them presently, and he hoped they would do their duty by him. He

told them that the man had written a book for the instruction of their children, and that if they learned from it, they would become as base heretics as he was himself! And he hoped they would stop his proceedings. The jury retired, but could not come to a decision, and one of them said there was a discrepancy in the indictment relating to a passage that was in the book. “Pray what is that?” said his lordship. The juror replied, “My Lord, the book says, ‘That after the one thousand years reign of Christ, the rest of the dead shall be raised,’ and the indictment says, ‘The rest of the *devils* shall be raised.’” “Is that all?” said his lordship. “Is that all the difference? It is a mere slip of the pen, correct that, and find your verdict accordingly.” The sentence passed on the prisoner was as follows— “The sentence of this court is—and you will consider it a very lenient one—that you stand in the stocks four hours—two hours during the market at Aylesbury; two hours during the market at Winslow; to have a label placed on your head, ‘For writing and publishing a wicked and schismatic book, called ‘The Child’s English Primer.’ Afterwards, this book to be burned before your eyes by the common hangman; you are to forfeit also £20 to the king; to find securities for your good behavior till the next judgment (that is, he was not to preach) and then to come to this court and renounce all your doctrines.” That was then. The *now*, they saw tonight. The statements they had heard would have subjected the speakers to incarceration and the stocks. They blessed God that that monster of civil and religious tyranny, that colossus that strode over their liberties, had been slain, and they blessed Him for the liberty they enjoyed, and prayed that they might never become indifferent to its value or to the responsibilities devolving upon them. Poor Benjamin Keach was given to understand that probably he might have greater liberty in preaching the gospel if he came to London. So he turned his few effects into money, and started

with his wife and three children. He had to travel 50 miles from Winslow to London, a frightful day's work then, and so it turned out. On a heath, a set of highwaymen attacked the coach, compelled all the passengers to alight, robbed them of everything, and then allowed them to proceed; Keach, his wife and family, were set down at the Blue Boar, Holborn Hill, without a shilling or a known friend in London. That was *then*. *Now* the express travels from Winslow to London in 55 minutes. Keach became the pastor of this church in 1668, and in 1672, a proclamation was instituted called King Charles' Indulgence—an indulgence to allow the people to think and to tell what they thought. Well, it was a privilege, though Keach was one among the rest who saw through the scheme; it was an artful dodge, but still they availed themselves of it, and built their first chapel at Horsley Down to accommodate one thousand people, where Keach preached for the remainder of his life! Then in the year 1688 came what was called the glorious revolution out of which arose the Act of Toleration—which ought to be perpetuated by an annual service! He (**Mr. Dickerson**) lived in the country till he was nearly 40 years of age, and if it had not been for a few books, he would never have known that such an Act had ever passed! Dissenters never heard anything about it. If Benjamin Keach's book was read more extensively, it would give a vast amount of information concerning the "Then" as compared with the "Now." In his book called, "Distressed Zion Relieved, or the Garment of Praise for the Spirit of Heaviness," there were some very choice passages. The address to the reader concluded as follows—"Let us strive to be thankful to God, and labor to live in love with one another, and improve the present providence (referring to the Toleration Act). For since God has graciously been pleased to do wonders for us, let us endeavor to do some great things for Him." So he said *then*, what would he not, and

what ought not Christians to say *now*! It was an important thing to keep the great point of civil and religious liberty permanently before the people so that the gigantic limbs of tyranny in Church and State might never stride over their liberties again; but as their fathers fought, were put in stocks, suffered loss of property, and many of them of life, and had bequeathed unto their children that inestimable blessing, it was the duty of the latter to cherish it and always keep it in view. He concluded by citing two verses of the 90th Psalm, wishing he could do so as well as the aged Dr. Rippon at the opening of New Park Street Chapel. "Let Your work appear unto Your servants, and Your glory unto their children, and let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish You the work of our hands upon us; yes, the work of our hands establish You it."

Dr. JABEZ BURNS said a great number of things pressed upon his mind with regard to the Tabernacle. It appeared to him remarkable that such a building should be raised at all as a place of worship, and, then, that it should be by any other than the wealthy State Church, or the wealthiest Nonconformist bodies. That it should be reared by the Baptists, who had been considered to occupy a very small place proportionately among the sections of the Christian Church, was a matter of very great surprise—especially when it was remembered that the building was mainly raised through the labors of a young minister, and during the first seven years of his pastorate! These things were really so wonderful, that if anybody had predicted their occurrence eight or nine years ago, no one would have believed it. As the building was peculiar in itself, so it was peculiar in its opening services. The Methodists had generally taken the lead in having protracted services at the opening of their chapels, but he believed the services in which they were assisting would far outdo any Methodist services as to any building in any part of the world, not only in their

number, but their importance, in the various plans to be developed, the things to be suggested, and the classes of persons addressing the assemblies convened. As the building was magnificent externally and internally, and capable of holding a vast concourse of people, he would pray that it should always be filled with the Divine presence and glory, and that the Church within it might prosper and increase from year to year. He had been asked, "What is the great secret of Mr. Spurgeon's success?" Did anyone know? If anyone did, he would be much obliged for the information! He was inclined to think that there were a number of things connected with the secret of his success—some human, and others Divine. Some connected with himself as a man—others as a minister whom God had raised up, and abundantly blessed. Unquestionably, one secret was that he had broken through the old-fashioned conventionalities connected with the pulpit and with preaching. The pulpit had become so stiff, starched, and stereotyped, that something was required to break it down, and to bring it into closer contact with the masses of the people. Some reference had been made to the voice of the minister, and, certainly, it was not everybody who could by ordinary speaking fill the building, though it was not as difficult to speak in as might be supposed from its size. After speaking of the several divisions in the denomination, Dr. Burns said he had read enough of Mr. Spurgeon's sermons to know that he preached Christ, and made Him the central theme of his ministry! Among the various peculiarities which distinguished the Baptist denomination, the first was their conviction that religion was a *personal* thing, that it could not be hereditary, that it could not be transmitted from the ends of the fingers of priests, nor be obtained by proxy; but that in all cases religion was a personal thing, connected with spiritual illumination, with heart conviction, the regeneration of the soul, and with personal

holiness. As the result of that, they held most tenaciously that if religion was necessarily a personal thing between man and God, it was not for any human authority to interfere; and therefore Baptists in all ages had been the persecuted, not the persecutors! It might be said that they had not the chance. That was a mistake, Roger Williams was banished from one of the New England States in the very depth of winter, for holding Baptist views; he was directed to the shores of providence, and there, with his party, he founded one of the United States of America, where he gave the utmost freedom of conscience, and did not demand from any of those who chose to dwell with him the least infringement of their Christian liberties! He was the first, on that side of the Atlantic, to teach in all their depth, height, and blessed purity, the principles of religious equality! He (**Dr. Burns**) agreed with the last speaker that the word, “Tabernacle,” was improperly applied to the building, except in one respect, and that was that, like the ancient Tabernacle, it was reared by voluntary contributions, and there was money enough and to spare. He prayed that the Lord would bless the congregation, the minister, the office bearers, Sabbath school teachers, and those who should visit the benighted heathen in that locality—and unto Him, the source of all good, should the entire glory always be given!

A vote of thanks having been accorded to the Chairman, **Mr. Spurgeon** pronounced the benediction, and the proceedings terminated.

377 MEETING OF THE VARIOUS DENOMINATIONS

Wednesday Evening, April 3rd, 1861,
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

For the Purpose of Hearing Addresses
on Christian Unity

The **CHAIR**, which was occupied by **EDWARD BALL, Esq., M.P.**, was taken at half-past six o'clock.

The proceedings were commenced by singing and prayer.

The **REV. C. H. SPURGEON** briefly stated the objective of the meeting to be not to collect money, for they were now out of debt, but to testify to the essential union of the Church. On the previous evening, a meeting had been held in the same place to afford an opportunity for the public exposition of the doctrines of Baptists, and there were some now present, perhaps, who would recollect how strongly Baptist they all were on that occasion, and how they all spoke of their own denomination and its progress. Now, he had no doubt, they would prove that they felt themselves to be none the less one with all believers in striving against error, and upholding the believer of God. The different brothers in the ministry who would address them would take up different points with regard to union. They had not an Episcopalian, because the clergyman, whom he had invited, though perfectly willing, was unable to come. Nor had they a Presbyterian; he had just received a telegram from the Presbyterian brother who was to have been there, saying that he was taken ill yesterday.

He would now give the meeting to the guidance of his friend, **Edward Ball, Esq.**, of Cambridgeshire, and as he had often experienced the hospitality of Mr. Ball, he felt a very great pleasure in being his host, as it were, and making Mr. Ball the master of the occasion so that he might rule the roost in their midst!

The CHAIRMAN said, if anything in connection with this extraordinary place of worship could be added to the feeling of surprise with which they had witnessed its progress, and now perceived its perfection and completion, it would have been the statement which had just been made by the minister, that not only had they built this house of such surpassing beauty, and such great convenience, and such large accommodation for all classes, but that they met at the opening of it entirely out of debt! Those who were acquainted with the efforts made by the Christian world were well aware of the difficulties that were oftentimes found in raising a sufficient sum of money to commence an edifice, and that occasionally, when the edifice had been raised, there was such a heavy debt resting upon it, that it loaded and oppressed the minds and efforts of the congregation, frequently discouraging the minister in his public duties, and altogether the occasion of sorrow and regret in the neighborhood in which the chapel was erected. What, then, must they think of the church and congregation of this place? What must have been their untiring efforts, their constant diligence, the exercise of faith in God, to have completed such an undertaking as this, to have watched its progress, and now to assemble at its completion, when all their desires had been realized, when they had raised a fabric such as London could not equal, and when they might congregate, as upon this occasion, without soliciting the aid of anybody, and welcome their guests to a union meeting, where they could have a festival of love unaccompanied with the

inconvenience and the distaste which so commonly were associated with such meetings as this—without soliciting their charity or asking their aid! It was not only that they must recognize the great zeal and the unwearied exertion of the church and congregation under Mr. Spurgeon, but was it not manifest that God's hand was in the work, and God's power was exhibited? That power which was so constantly implored had watched over, had given guidance to, and had successfully realized the wishes of the minister and of the people of this place. Was not all they had seen in the progress of that congregation, under the minister, another evidence that not by might, nor by power, but by God's will, and God's help, and God's assistance, the mightiest projects, the grandest efforts, and all that a Christian could desire were to be accomplished when they gave continued effort and blended with that continued effort an unwavering faith in the promises of God's immutable and indestructible word?

Perhaps, while all of them sympathized and had pleasure in the association of this night, it was not everyone who had so intimate and immediate an appreciation of the gospel in this place, or so deep a sympathy with the success of the ministry, as he had. As Mr. Spurgeon had stated to them, Mr. S. and he had long known each other, had lived in the same neighborhood, and had associated for public purposes long before Mr. Spurgeon ever contemplated being a minister in London. He had witnessed his first efforts, he knew the village in which he first settled, and he could bear testimony to the good sense and the good judgment of that portion of the Christian world who considered that his services ought not to be confined to a village, or limited to a small association, but that his sphere was the metropolis and that to London he was to come, to awaken, to excite, and to give an increased effort to the Christian world, showing what might be done when

people trusted in God, and when they labored continually and unweariedly in the service of God! Those gentlemen who accomplished the removal of Mr. Spurgeon, provided for him a very convenient, and a very nice chapel, but in proportion as they afforded accommodation for the public, did the demand increase. That chapel was renovated, improved, and considerably enlarged, and no sooner was that accomplished, than it was filled as theretofore to overflowing. Why did he (the Chairman) mention this? To show that the grasp of mind of the congregation was justified—that it was not an aggressive undertaking, the erecting such an edifice as this—but that it was the continued success, the series of triumphs, the advancing interests, the multitudinous claims always attendant upon the ministry of this gentleman that justified them! The Chairman next commented on the value of Mr. Spurgeon's ministerial labors, which he considered ought not to be estimated by the visible effect upon his congregation, but also by the influence which the extended publication of his sermons throughout England and the Colonies, and the reprinting of them in America, might be expected to have upon multitudes of others.

But, to return to the special objective of the present meeting, which he was told by Mr. Spurgeon was "Union," he was sorry to say, he thought the great calamity and error of the Christian Church was need of union. He thought that all Christian people should adopt as their sentiment this—that in essentials, they should have unity; in non-essentials, liberty; and in everything, they ought to have charity. If they did observe and carry out this great maxim, those little bickering and nasty jealousies, and unlovely envying, which were the disgrace of the Christian Church, would be known no more. What said the apostle John? There were multitudes of circumstances which showed to us the surpassing love of God but—"Hereby," he

says, “we perceive the love of God, because He laid down His life for us,” and the inference which the apostle drew from this was that, “If God so loved the world, as to send His only begotten Son into the world,” was it not a motive and an obligation for those people for whom He loved, and suffered, and died, to love each other? Look, again, were we not all under the same condemnation, were we not all partaking of the curse and of the fall? Had we not also the same hope, and the same expectation of redemption and deliverance from that fall, and should we not love one another as brethren? Were we not passing through the wilderness together? Had we not sorrow enough, and trial enough, and vexation enough, bodily pain and mental distraction enough, that we must increase its bitterness by a lack of love, and by a narrow jealousy, one towards another? Were we not all aiming at the same paradise above, banded together under one great Shepherd, and, therefore, ought we not to love one another as God’s people, and as God’s servants! Most of his hearers, perhaps, had a recollection of the circumstances of Ruth. Ruth was a most successful gleaner. She collected a great quantity, and after she had done so, she beat it out, and part she carried away, and part she left behind. Now what part did they suppose she carried away? Well, everybody would say she carried away the corn, and left the chaff. Could not, therefore, we, in our mutual union in our common services—in our common duties—look upon one another, see what was good, receive what was good, lay aside and leave what was distasteful and unpleasant? Could we not take that which was in correspondence to our views of the truth, in harmony with our sentiments and our principles, and if there were anything disagreeable, ascribe it to that common infirmity to which they and we were subjected, and bear and forbear as it became Christian people to do one towards another? He remembered once a large Missionary meeting was to be held,

and it was decided to hold it in the church. After the decision, it was found that there were no candles, no lamps in the church, and there was a question as to how it should be lighted up. Well, the friends there were not daunted by a few difficulties! The Episcopalians sent their lamps, the Wesleyans and other religious deSermon nominations sent their lamps, and others were sent from the Town Hall. When they assembled, it was beautifully lighted up, but it was said nobody could tell which was the light of the Church of England, and which was the light of the Baptists, and which was the light of the Wesleyans; but as one Spirit brought them together in the service of one Master, so one mind influenced the whole assembly, and they had a beautiful meeting in which they pledged their common faith diligently to preach the everlasting gospel, and to assist others in doing the same!

It was a remarkable circumstance, that while *now* they were continually hearing of some expressions of great bitterness of one class towards another class, which bitterness only generated similar bitterness in that class against whom they had spoken, or it only elevated the individuals against whom they had been denouncing, just in proportion as those things did occur, the church that used them, the minister who encouraged them, the individual who patronized, as it were, a nasty little bickering, envious spirit, was generally a minister that God would not acknowledge, whose services were never successful, whose congregation was an indifferent body of Christian people, and not unusually, the very minister who had been so bitter in his insults against others who had preached the gospel of Christ, had himself, by some strange circumstances, been forbidden long to occupy that sacred office! And therefore, he (the Chairman) would say that all should endeavor to carry out the principle which their minister had told them they were associated to celebrate, namely, UNION; that whether they

were Wesleyans or Presbyterians, or whether they were Baptists or Independents, they were all under one Shepherd, they were all pledged to the same faith, they all had the same hope, and they would never advance their cause by repudiating and condemning others; they would never elevate their principles by speaking bitterly of those who could not agree with them; but in proportion as they demonstrated a Christian spirit, and showed forth the mind of their Master, God would commonly accept and bless their services. He regretted the absence of any representative of the Church of England. He wished all classes, churchmen and dissenters, would lay aside all angry and unkind feeling towards one another. They could not disguise from themselves that God had given great honor to the Church of England. They ought not to wish to disguise it that that Church never put forth such energy, and exhibited such anxiety to fulfill its mission as it did now, and they ought to rejoice together as those having the same interest, members of the same commonwealth, embodied in the same regiment, and marching under the same leader, when any minister among the Church or among Dissenters was made preeminently useful in preaching the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ! If there was one thing that he (the Chairman) desired above all things in the Christian world, it was *unity*. He hoped he had always endeavored to carry that out. If they were God's people, there must be love in their hearts, one towards another. He only wished he could give utterance to one idea that would have the tendency to link together Christian people in attachment to their master in affectionate union with those with whom they were fellow travelers through the wilderness, in hopeful and joyful expectation of associating with them in another and a better world where they should live as brothers and sisters in perfect peace and unity! Let them bear with one another's infirmities.

The REV. J. HALL, Independent Minister, next addressed the meeting. He regarded it, and he thought all must do so, as a token for good, an auspicious sign of the times passing over us, that the friends there should attach so much importance to union among Christians, that they should give a whole evening to the discussion of this important subject. Was it possible to over-rate its importance? Why, they could not read their Bibles, even with moderate care, without seeing that the practical exemplification of union among Christians was one of the grand designs of the Christian dispensation! Indeed, they were expressly told that the Savior purposed, by His death, to gather together in *one*, all the children of God who were scattered over the earth, and they knew that for the accomplishment of this design He interceded, almost with His dying breath, in language that gave us to understand that the unity of the Church was one of the grand means of the world's conversion; And, as a matter of fact, while visible unity prevailed among the disciples of the Savior, the cause of Christianity everywhere triumphed. Yes, the poor fishermen of Galilee, without wealth, without learning, without patronage—standing only on God's truth—were more than a match for all the powers of the world standing together on the devil's lie! Real visible union was the glory of the Church of Christ, and never till that glory of the Lord was seen afresh upon her, would the nations come to her light and kings to the brightness of her rising. What was it that made it to be a good sign that they should meet together to talk about such a subject? The reason had already been referred to by the Chairman. Alas, the Church of Christ still presented a scene of strife and division, and contention, and Christians gathered together of all denominations to talk about this matter might, with Divine blessing, be the means of healing, or helping to heal, the breaches of Zion! We talked about the wonders of the age we

live in. Well, it was certainly an age of progress. The inventions of science had come almost within the bounds of the supernatural, and natural marvels reached well nigh to miracles. The impossibilities of our forefathers had become to us a baffle and a pastime—we ride upon the wings of vapor, we bind the winds of heaven to our car, we navigate the ocean against contrary winds and tempestuous waves, we lay hold of the lightning of heaven, and make them the world's errand boy, and we make the light our portrait painter and yet—it brought the blush to our faces—union among Christians was still in open question! And Christians, the intended peacemakers of the world, were not able to settle the preliminaries of a truce among themselves. Still, Christians who were commanded to love their own enemies, had not, many of them, enough religion to love one another; Christians who were required to pray for their persecutors were yet to be found who would not pray with their brethren of other denominations!

The question which he (Mr. Hall) had to consider was, “What do the Scriptures teach us concerning union among Christians?” Now, it was evident from the whole word of God, as well as from Christian experience, that there was an essential oneness among all the disciples of the Lord, whatever might be their party names or their sectarian divisions. By virtue of their common relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ, they were allied, one to the other, in the bond of a common fellowship and in the hope of a glorious destiny. Wherever real Christians might be, whatever the color of their skin, whether they were white or black, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free—whether they burned at the equator, or shivered at the poles—they were all one in Christ Jesus! They were willing, too, to relinquish the world's wealth, and the world's fame, and the world's honor for the glory of His name, and the blessings of His cross. If they went round the whole world and just asked every Christian

this question, "What do you think of Christ?" they would get but one answer from every one of them, "He is the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely." If they were to bring together into one room Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and Wesleyan, and Baptist, and Independent, what would take place? If they named the prayer book, and found fault with it, he was afraid the Churchman would jump up. If they dared to call in question the confession of faith, he was afraid the Presbyterian would be annoyed. The same with the Wesleyan, if they impugned the acts of the conference; and if they dared to say a word against the Baptist, he did not know how the Baptist brother would feel; and then, if they presumed to call in question, for a moment, the divine origin of Independency, he did not know what the Independent would say. Well, now, these were the little things that would divide even good men, and perhaps, for a time, set them by the ears! But just ask them to pray together, and they would all bow the knee in the name of Christ; ask them to sing together, and they would shout in harmony, "God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Ask them to work together, and there might be many forms of work, and some in which they might not be able to unite; but put before them God's holy word, without note or comment, and ask them to lend their efforts and their sympathies to give the word of Life to the nations, and with one heart, and with one hand, they would find Wesleyan and Baptist, and Episcopalian and Presbyterian putting forth their energies to do this common work of all who love the Redeemer! Unity was the great thing which the word of God demanded—that there should be an outward manifestation before the world of this internal oneness among all Christians. What was lacking, was that union among Christians should be a visible *reality*—that there should be a public, tangible manifestation of that reality before the eyes of

the world in offices of brotherly kindness, and in efforts of Christian philanthropy. It was very delightful to know that all Christians were members of one body, of which Christ is the glorified Head—but then, that unity was known only to the Church in heaven, and understood only by the Church on earth! The *world* did not understand that—the world did not *see* that. What, therefore, was lacking, was what Christ prayed for—and prayed for as indispensable to the world's conversion—that the real spiritual unity of the Church should become a visible fact before the eyes of the *world*.

Well, then, what did this unity mean? Of course it did not mean *compromise*. No. Mr. Spurgeon had told them that last evening when they had a meeting of their own, to hear the exposition of their own peculiar views. Well, he (Mr. Hall) honored them for that, because the union which the Bible instructed was one which allowed the Baptist to remain a Baptist, the Episcopalian to remain an Episcopalian, the Presbyterian to remain a Presbyterian, and the Wesleyan still true to Wesley, and the Independent still an Independent. It aimed at combining them together on earth, on the same principle upon which it united them together in heaven, not as Denominationalists, but as Christians! He remembered reading one of Mr. Spurgeon's sermons in which he was indulging in some bright visions of the future, of the good times coming when morn should come after the world's long night, and Sabbath after the world's long toil; and one of the visions was this—that they should certainly all be Baptists. Well, he verily believed that if there should be a Metropolitan Tabernacle, it might be ornamented as this tonight, with the marble baptistery, and he believed that all Episcopalians and Presbyterians who did not believe in it, would have their own way of doing it, and yet the Baptist brother and the Paedo-Baptist brother would have more love. He did not know that it would be all the better

in the millennium that they should all be Baptists; he did not know that it would not be better for the extension of the kingdom of Christ, that there should still be some little difference in these little matters! Of course, the unity they had been speaking of did not mean *uniformity*. They knew that the Church of Rome, when she had the power of coercion, had repressed all religious opinion, and produced a very exact conformity to one system of doctrine and one formula of worship, and she called that “unity.” Why, it reminded one of the unity of a Dutch garden, where the trees were all clipped to the same size and shape. Unity? Why, it was the unity of the graveyard—where the prince and subject exhibited the same rottenness, and molded to the same dust! Diversity in unity, unity in diversity—that was the characteristic of all life; the Dutch gardener, to whom he had just referred, must at times have trouble to keep his trees all of the same size and shape; life was a very vigorous thing, and depend upon it, he had to be very busy about these trees to keep up any appearance of visible uniformity! There was a wonderful struggling in all life for individual manifestation. It would not be regarded as a very great compliment to his hearers if for a moment he imagined that they were all stone statues—and he saw a Christian brother in the assembly who had just brought this thought to his mind—that they were all stone statues. They might exhibit the most perfect uniformity; they might sit in the same attitude, with the same gesture and, in every respect, be all alike. Well, but suppose, just in the midst of this paradise of uniformity, they should be endued with the principle of *life*. The moment they began to live, the uniformity ended—they would alter their attitude; one would be looking this way, and another would be looking that way; one would have a pensive look, and the other a joyful look; and there would be, all the while, the play of the various emotions and passions of the human soul depicted in

their various countenances. And just where there was real life, there would be this diversity amid the underlying principle of unity. Why, the tastes and the temperaments of Christian people were as varied as their faces and their voices.

The natural temperament, doubtless, had a great deal to do in the growth of Christian graces. The temperament of a man before conversion remained with him after conversion, only with this difference—that now it was baptized with the Holy Spirit, and with fire, and consecrated to the service of God. For example, it was divine grace operating upon a disposition naturally amiable, which produced a Barnabas, a son of consolation. It was that working upon an energetic disposition which had fired a soul with great boldness in the faith and produced a Boanerges, a son of thunder. Look at Melancthon and Luther, Melancthon said the Scriptures imparted to the soul a holy and marvelous delight, it was the heavenly ambrosia. Now, Luther said, the word of the Lord was a sword, it was a war, it was a destruction, and it leaped upon the children of Ephraim like lions of the forest! These men were equally pious, yet the gentle Melancthon saw in the word of God little else than a fount of life, and a river of God's pleasure—while the impetuous and earnest Luther saw and heard only the thunder and the flame of an angry God! They might look at the history of Whitefield and of Edwards. Why, the ministry of Jonathan Edwards burst upon the people as alarming as the trumpet of doom, terrible as the kindling of the last fires, while the preaching of Whitefield came down upon the ears of the people like rain upon the newmown grass. Depend upon it, Whitefield could never have preached that sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." He would have been compelled to stop a hundred times in the course of the sermon to preach the love of Christ to sinners, and to shed tears over souls in peril of the wrath to come! Just for a moment look at it in the case of Peter

and John, and the same difference might be discovered. In conclusion, he would say that the three elements of Christian unity were *unity of faith* in relation to Christ, *unity of affection* in relation to one another, and *unity of effort* in relation to the world. With the visible practical union resulting from a common faith in Christ—brotherly kindness and confederated effort, the Church once more, as of old, would, “Look forth clear as the moon, bright as the sun, and terrible as a bannered host.”

EDWARD CORDEROY, Esq., said a more fitting theme could hardly be chosen in a house of prayer, erected by contributions from members of various Protestant Churches, than that which had been announced this evening. To many it would be a subject of sarcasm—for it was not *only* by Papists that we were charged with lack of unity. It would be useless to attempt to conceal our diversities; indeed it would be unwise if we could. Certainly, the aspect of the churches of this land justified, to the full, the statement that we had embraced as Protestants most heartily, one grand principle drawn from Scripture, and put forth at the Reformation—the right of private judgment. But there was a real, substantial, living unity among the disciples of Christ, nevertheless. Except for the weakness and infirmity of men, or the obstinacy and the ignorance of men which occasionally magnified apparent into real differences, there was nothing in any Church organization, nothing in the formularies of religion, nothing even in doctrine among what were called the Orthodox Churches of this land—there was nothing if we but believed that there was only one name given to men under heaven, whereby we might be saved—to prevent a real, substantial, effective union among all the disciples of Christ! The doctrine of true essential union among the disciples of Christ should, he took leave to say, be more fully explained, set forth, and generally received than it was at present. Oh, if they could imagine a spirit of the just

made perfect, enabled to pierce that thin veil which screens an unseen world from our mortal view, with this topic to discourse upon, how he would tell them that union with Christ the Head, must mean union of the members of His body, one with another! How he would tell them, as they had already been reminded, that it was written, “Beloved, if God so loved us, ought we not also to love one another?” How he would tell them that they fought for shadows if they fought for anything which bore not on the glorious hereafter! How he would tell them, with tones deepened from an intense realization of the things belonging to eternity, of the folly, the utter, miserable folly of those pettinesses which disfigure many Christian Churches because they come from weak, though in God’s mercy, good men! How he would tell them of our Savior’s word, “A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another as I have loved you.” How he would tell them that some of the very last utterances of Scripture, possibly the very last, the Epistle of John, breathed fully this doctrine, and the aged saint and apostle seemed to concentrate all the spirit of the gospel in his exhortation, “Little children, love one another!” Union, merely in name, would be thoroughly useless. Lip profession, unaccompanied by kindly acts, was little to be relied upon. Only a real spiritual, prayerful, brotherly union of the Church of Christ would increase the tone of the Church’s piety, quicken the Church’s zeal, and bless the world. The subject committed to him by Mr. Spurgeon was the influence of such a union upon the Church itself. If this spirit of real union were cultivated, there would be a prayerful cultivation of those characteristics which made this union desirable, and thereby there would be the growth in grace of the whole Church. One of the first results would be an anxiety for the honor of Christ—

“A jealous, just concern
For His immortal praise!
A pure desire that all might learn,
And glorify His grace.”

And whatever would magnify the Savior, add luster to His many crowns, and bring the world to His feet—that would be the object of the Church’s prayerful and devout effort. There would then be an earnest desire to grow more and more like the Savior, and as far as possible to follow in His steps; and as the Church, by its individual members, sought to act in the Spirit of the Savior, more and more of His Spirit would be imbibed, and as they sought to grow more and more like the Head, they would more readily recognize His likeness in any of His members wherever they were, and under whatever circumstances. There would also be an honor placed upon the poor, humble and afflicted members of Christ’s flock, which they sometimes did not now obtain. The charity which gives the cup of cold water to the disciple would no longer be dashed by the expectation of human applause, but it would be given to the disciple in the name of the disciple for the sake of the master. There would be an increase of the spirit of charity. We would have large eyes for each other’s excellences, and small vision for each other’s defects. Oh, for more of the charity that forgives the charity that covers the fault! Another effect would be the ability to rejoice in each other’s success. What a hard matter that is to some of us! Again, there would be a disposition to work together where practicable, or still, if not practicable, together, yet in such a spirit that Judah should not envy Ephraim, nor Ephraim vex Judah. There would be, too, the quickening of our zeal, and faith, and love. We would rejoice to help each other, to bear one another’s burdens. We would learn to speak lovingly, and kindly, and honorably, and

respectfully of each other, and not detractingly and as though we were glad to hear a whisper of any delinquency.

The REV. ROBERT BUSHNELL, Free Methodist, next addressed the meeting in a very humorous speech. After some preliminary observations, he said he very much rejoiced in the erection of the building in which they were assembled for one or two important reasons. The first was he believed it would be the birth place of immortal souls. There was a spot in old England—he knew it quite well, the likeness of it was gratefully embalmed in his memory—he did not mean to say that it was a bit better than any other spot, but it was better to him. He could remember the shape of the windows and the doors; he knew the look of that old building altogether and there was not such a house in old England as that house was to him. He would tell them why. He was born there, and he was born-again there. A short time ago, he visited that spot—he went to follow his poor mother to the grave. He looked at the house, and could have wept over it, and if the people there would not have thought him superstitious, he would not have minded giving a shilling to go to the very room and kneel upon the very spot where he was when God converted him. It was the second birth which made it glorious. And so he had no doubt at all that this house of prayer would be dear to thousands of souls, because they would be there born to God! But then, that was not all. He believed it would also be a place of spiritual refreshment for saints. He quite thought, notwithstanding all that people said to the contrary, that if they wanted a bit of good substantial food, they might get it there. He came on Good Friday morning, and he confessed that he felt it was God's house. He did not mean to say that they would get very many flowers there, they did not need them. Food was the sort of thing that they needed. Flowers looked very well upon the tables, but they would not like the flowers if there was

not food as well. There were two men on a road one day, and they had had a very long journey, and were awfully hungry. At length, one of them saw what he conceived to be an inn. "This is it, brother," he said, "come on." So in they went, and the waiter came with an apron, just as they do, and he looked very natty, and there was a table very beautifully spread, and the dishes and silverware, and all there. So these men said to the waiter, "What have you got?" "Well"—he hardly knew. "Have you got any ducks?" they asked. "No." "Chickens?" "No." "Beef steaks?" "No." "Why, what in the world do you keep, then?" they said. "Well," he said, "we keep a tavern." Now, there were some buildings in which there were all the things necessary except the one thing necessary. He believed that in this house of prayer there would be meat for men, milk for babies, and spiritual nourishment for the fainting and the dying! To come to the subject of unity, they all knew that unity was strength. A little drop of water might fall upon the face of a delicate lady, and she would hardly know it, but put a mass of drops together, and you have got the ocean big enough to bear or bury the Leviathan! **Mr. Bushnell**, then, gave several illustrations of the manifestations of unity, concluding with that afforded by the erection of the Tabernacle itself.

The REV. W. G. LEWIS, of Bayswater, said the subject entrusted to him was one so vast in its extent, and so weighty in its consequences, that he almost felt guilty of temerity in attempting to handle it. It was, "What are the limits of practical union?" There could be no union without a creed. Let it be distinctly understood that beautiful and fair, and celestial as charity was, truth was her lifeblood. Without it, she could not exist. All associations of men of whatever kind existed upon sympathy of belief. Moral, political, scientific or religious associations all had one common center, one basis of belief. So long, however, as men were built upon the foundation of the

apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ, Himself, being the chief cornerstone, all their differences were cast into the shade. The old axiom of the Reformers was, “In essentials, unity; in doubtful things, liberty; in all things, charity.” For his own part, he hesitated not plainly to announce that he could have no practical union with a man unless he believed the inspiration of God’s holy word, though he might feel charity towards him. He was not speaking of the limits of love, or attempting to put boundaries to the exercise of brotherhood and regard for the welfare of his fellow men, but for all purposes of concerted usefulness, and co-operation, he could have no Christian fellowship with the man who did not firmly hold the inspiration of God’s word. They would have no platform upon which to stand; no standard to which to appeal in their differences. Such a man would go beneath the foundation of his (Mr. Lewis’s) belief, and in these days, the great enemy of our souls was very busy in deluding and impelling men to make attacks upon the sacred word. He had no fear for the safety of the ark of God. It had already survived darker storms than those which seemed at this day to impend upon it. It was only 70 years ago that Voltaire, the high priest of infidelity, published that blasphemous threat, “In 60 years there shall be no Bible.” And tonight, where was the printing press that was employed in publishing the threat—in the city of Geneva, *printing Bibles!* All that infidelity had at present accomplished in regard to the Bible had been to prove the bitterness of its malice, and utter impotency of its own attacks! He could have no practical communion with a man who did not believe in the utter degeneracy of the entire human race in consequences of sin. He would not reiterate the statements of the word of God to the effect that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. He need not point to the lives of men to illustrate it from their personal or individual history—it stood impressed upon

every conscience that was not utterly seared and dead! It was written on every page that recorded human life—whether that page were sacred or profane—and his own experience led him to the firm belief that no man ever yet did embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ until he had a deep conviction of his condition as a lost sinner in the sight of God. Neither could he have fellowship with a man who did not hold the doctrine of the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. The doctrine of the Trinity, to his mind, was essential to the very structure of the sacred oracles. The man who impugned the doctrine of the Trinity, to his (Mr. Lewis's) mind, impugned the veracity of God! Nor could he hold union and co-operate with any man who did not stand fast by the doctrine of the Atonement. Catholicity was not compromise. Catholicity and Christian unity must imply "No surrender of vital doctrines."

The REV. C. H. SPURGEON, who was introduced as the representative of the Primitive Methodist and Presbyterian Churches, made a few remarks upon the subject. It was among the Primitive Methodists that he first found the Savior. It was by one of their local preachers that he learned to look unto Jesus and be saved, and now, he was really a *Primitive Methodist*, for he practiced Baptism after the most primitive form! But next he claimed to represent the Presbyterians because their Church was based on the Presbyterian model, and maintained the eldership. The union of which they spoke was a union of the Church; and as the limit of union, the Church had no spiritual union with the world, with worldly professors, nor with carnal men, although they might be in the Church. The Church might sometimes be compelled to use worldly men, but any union with them would deceive and beguile her. The Church might have to use men for her purpose that she might achieve her temporal and political liberties; but her real fellowship never extended beyond herself. It was an awful truth,

perverted, and therefore forgotten, that there was no salvation out of the pale of the Church. But what was the Church? Those who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ—this was their *visible* character—those who were filled with the Holy Spirit—that was their *secret* character. It was utterly impossible to narrow the limits of Christian fellowship. He concluded by expressing his satisfaction at the meeting, and said it was a sweet and refreshing season.

A vote of thanks was then unanimously accorded to the Chairman, which was acknowledged by him, and the meeting separated.

378 CHRIST'S FINISHED WORK – JOHN 19:30

A Sermon
Delivered on Thursday Evening, April 4th, 1861,
by the
REV. OCTAVIUS WINSLOW, D. D.
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“It is finished!” — John 19:30

THERE NEVER EXISTED but one being who in truth could affirm of His work—“It is finished!” Incompleteness and defect trace the vastest, elaborate, and accomplished products of human genius and power. That brilliant volume of history, at a period of thrilling interest, falls from the death-struck hand of its author, fragmentary and incomplete. That magnificent work of art fades before the glazed eye of the painter and the sculptor, at a moment when the pencil is pointed, and the chisel upraised to impart the last and perfecting touch. That splendid edifice, the conception of a master mind, with all its architectural skill and beauty, is but a monument of human forethought and power blinded and cramped in its range. Thus, contemplate man’s noblest achievements—the intellectual and the physical—the touch of human imperfection and incompleteness mars and traces all. The great truth, then, stands out like a constellation flaming in its own solitary orbit, that there never was but *one* man who could gaze with complacency upon His work and, with His expiring breath, exclaim, “It is finished!” That man was the God-Man, Mediator, who, as the Son, and yet the Servant of the Father, relinquished His throne for a cross, that He might accomplish the redemption,

work out the salvation of His Church—the people given to Him of God—and who, on the eve of that redemption and with all the certainty of an actual atonement, could thus breathe His intercessory petition to heaven, “I have *finished* the work which You gave Me to do.”

We summon you this evening around the Cross of Calvary, to listen to the words now breathing from the quivering lips of our dying Lord—“It is finished!” And believing, as I do most firmly and solemnly, that no scriptural doctrine, no revealed truth, will ever be able to confound the infidelity of the present day, we meet to explode the many errors and heresies, fearful and fatal, which are inseparable from this age of licentious thought, unchecked utterance and freedom of opinion. We summon you this evening to proclaim the one remedy—the simple, full, unreserved exhibition of the ATONEMENT, the SACRIFICIAL, and FINISHED WORK of the Lord Jesus Christ! I am the more anxious and earnest on this important and impressive occasion to bend upon it your especial, devout, and solemn attention. Oh, that our modern theological controversialists—the men who are desirous of contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints—who are putting on their armor and furbishing their weapons for the approaching conflict, might learn the secret of their might, wherein their great strength lies! It is not in accumulating around the cross the stores of ancient and modern love; it is not in a strife of arms, dazzling and distinguished by profound intellectualism, learning, and eloquence—but in a simple, bold, uncompromising presentation of the Atoning and Finished sacrifice of Christ—the lifting up, in its naked simplicity and solitary, unapproachable grandeur, of the Cross of the Incarnate God, the instrument of the sinner’s salvation, the foundation of the believer’s hope, the symbol of pardon, reconciliation, and hope to the soul; in a word, the grand

weapon by which error shall bow to truth, and sin give place to righteousness; and the kingdoms of this world long in rebellion against God, crushed and enthralled, shall yield to Messiah's specter, spring from the dust, burst their bonds, and exalt in the undisputed supremacy and benign reign of Jesus! And believing, too, as I firmly do, that so large an amount of corroding doubts, and gloomy fears, and painful forebodings, which so essentially and so widely impede the religious progress, invade and cloud the spiritual joy and hope of the Lord's people, is mainly traceable to imperfect, crude, and dim views and apprehensions of Christ's complete work, of the Savior's finished salvation which He has worked for His Church—not distinctly seeing that all is done—the great debt paid, the mighty bond cancelled, the full atonement made, sin all and freely forgiven, I am still the more desirous of placing this great, this cardinal and precious truth prominently and broadly, as the Lord the Spirit shall help me, before the present assembly, trusting and believing that, in answer to prayer, there will be tonight the presence and power of the Holy Spirit descending, invisible and noiseless, upon your souls, sealing upon your hearts this grand, this essential, this saving truth—the FINISHED WORK OF CHRIST. "It is finished."

Let us consider these memorable words—

I. As THE CRY OF A SUFFERER. And what a sufferer! Contemplate for a moment *the divine dignity* of the sufferer. Here was no ordinary sufferer, my brothers and sisters. We approach the scene of the crucifixion, and we behold three individuals alike suspended upon three different crosses, two on either side and one in the center. They all suffer—all languish—all die. But the sufferings and death of one is attended by circumstances so strange, and events so unparalleled, by prodigies so miraculous and sublime, that we are led to exclaim in wondering awe, "Who is this?" And the voice of prophecy replies, "This is *He*

of whom I spoke—‘Awake, O sword, against My shepherd and against the man who is My fellow, says the Lord of hosts; smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.’” My dear hearers, if throughout the life of Christ I could fasten upon no other event confirming the doctrine of the Godhead of Christ, I would be willing and satisfied to predicate my argument in vindication of His essential dignity upon the closing scene of the cross—the last moments of His parting life. If His life were destitute of fact, His death alone would supply the evidence that He who died upon Calvary was none other than the Son of God! Hold fast the doctrine of Christ’s essential Deity, for upon it, as upon a rock, reposes the entire and stupendous fabric of the ATONEMENT.

The sufferings of Christ were *expiatory* and *vicarious*. You are aware that by many this fact is denied. The only solution of the mystery of Christ’s death offered by the school to which I refer, is that which presents our Lord as a model of patience and resignation in suffering—a saint in virtue—a hero in endurance. And thus, the cross of Christ is deprived of its magnificence and robbed of its glory! But our Lord suffered as an expiatory Offering, as a vicarious Victim. All suffering is, *in a sense*, vicarious—not in the fullest meaning of the term, as conveying the idea of *substitution*, but simply and only in the sense that all suffering is the effect and consequence of sin. The man who violates the laws of his physical nature—who puts the empoisoned cup of intemperance to his lips to steal away his brains—who wastes his substance in riotous living—who herds among the unclean, and sacrifices to his baser passions health, property, character, shall suffer as a consequence of his lawlessness, folly and sin. He cannot trample upon the laws of his physical and mental constitution with impunity—he shall *suffer*. These sufferings shall not expiate his transgression, but they shall follow in its wake a sure and dire consequence. Our

Lord's sufferings were also the result and consequence of *sin*—sin not His own, but His people's; and in the fullest and most emphatic meaning of the terms, were expiatory and vicarious—sufferings, not only the fruit of sin, but more than that, suffering expiatory of sin—sufferings, substitutionary and vicarious, sacrificial and atoning. There are theologians who dispute this statement, who deny this doctrine; but I challenge them to explain these sufferings of our Lord satisfactorily upon any other hypothesis than this. I bring them back to the idea, that all human suffering is the effect of sin—our Lord suffered the death of the cross. Was not that death in some way connected with sin? Most assuredly! Had there been no sin, there had been no suffering. This granted, we advance a step further, and claim for that death of Christ, a substitutionary character, an atoning nature—a sin expiatory result. And so the revealed truth of God stands out in all its magnitude and glory; and this is the only clue to the mystery—“*He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities.*” “*Who, His own self, bore our sins in His own body on the tree.*” “*Christ also has loved us and has given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savor.*” “*The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.*” Behold the Almighty sufferer! There stood the Son of God, bearing the sin and enduring the curse of His Church—putting away the one, and entirely exhausting the other—by the sacrifice of Himself. To all the demands of God's moral government, to all the claims of law and justice, Jesus now, on behalf of the people for whom He stood as surety, gave a full, honorable, and accepted satisfaction. Come, poor sin-burdened, heart-broken penitent, and sit beneath the shadow of this tree of life, and its bending fruit of pardon, peace, joy and hope shall be sweet to your believing taste! But the sufferings of Christ were *unparalleled and intense*. Never since the universe was formed was there such a sufferer as Jesus. He was

the Prince of sufferers. No sorrow ever broke the heart like that which tore His in two. Truly could He challenge the universe of sufferers, and ask, “Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Behold and see if there is any sorrow like unto My sorrow.” No, Lord! Your sufferings had no parallel; no sorrows were ever like unto Yours!

I do not go with the Greek Church, as you know. I differ from it both ecclesiastically and doctrinally. But I admire and love what is good, find it where I may. And I perfectly assent to the remark of my beloved brother, made in the vestry before the service, “That there’s some good in all Christian communions and creeds, and that it is our wisdom to accept what is good, and leave what is evil.” Now, that is a sublime sentence in the liturgy of the Greek Church, which I have often pondered with emotion—“Your unknown agonies.” Yes, the agonies of our sin-suffering, sin-atoning Lord were unknown! They were in their intensity known only to His holy soul. No angel could ever fathom their depth; no finite mind shall ever be able to gauge the breadth, to scale the height, to conceive even of the agony of His soul when He exclaimed, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? I can bear the abandonment of My disciples—one has denied Me, another has betrayed Me, all have forsaken Me—but O My God, My God, why have *You* forsaken Me?” We may form some idea of their character, else how can we with Paul have fellowship with Him in His sufferings? First, there was the *physical* element; our blessed Lord suffered *bodily*. Men of science and of sanctified intellect have endeavored to analyze and describe the physical agonies which Christ endured, when His heart was broken with grief; but physiology in its noblest triumphs has never been able to fully portray what the Savior endured when, like the rending rocks around His cross—

“That heart was torn asunder,
Never once defiled by sin.”

Then there was *mental agony*. The mental grief He endured, who can conceive? His mind was a human mind, and all the more sensitive because it was a sinless mind. The human sympathy of Christ infinitely transcends the most exquisite sympathy that glows in *our* bosom, because it was the sympathy of a pure and sinless humanity. There is selfishness in our sympathy. We love to sympathize with the sufferer because we love the sufferer, and we are paying homage to our love to the creature when we take the hand and dry the tears, and speak the words of consolation. But the sympathy of Christ was all the more exquisite, and all the more tender, and all the more human, because it was all the freer from sin. The perfect sinlessness of Christ's sympathy did not in the slightest degree affect the perfect humanity of His sympathy. He was more human than you and I are, because His humanity was entirely free from sin. We are not all human. We possess a part of a demoniacal nature. Sin has impaired all those glorious virtues and excellences which our humanity in its primitive condition possessed, and ours is a distorted, paralyzed, altered humanity. Let your humanity be restored to its original righteousness, to its primitive purity; let it be elevated, renewed, sanctified, ennobled, as your humanity will be if you are believers in Christ, and as you gradually recede from sin you will approach the perfect. As sin is eliminated and purged away from your nature, your crushed, your bruised, your bowed humanity will rise in its original purity, and majesty, and glory, and you will be all the more human because you approach all the more to the purity of the divine.

But the *soul-suffering* of our Lord was more intense than all. This was inconceivable, indescribable. Listen to the cry in

Gethsemane, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death.” The billows of God’s wrath began now to penetrate His Nature, the storm to break in upon His soul. Oh, that was a terrible moment! It was only now that He began to succumb to the woe. Before this He had maintained a comparatively calm and uncomplaining demeanor. The tempest until now was *outside*. When a vessel, coursing its way over the ocean, is arrested by a storm—the fierce winds blowing, the ocean broken into billows, seething, raging, roaring—as long as his gallant boat plows its way, and keeps its course, the mariner treads its deck undaunted by fear, confident in the strength and firmness of his vessel to outride and outlive the tempest. But let the cry be heard, “A leak! A leak! A plank is sprung, the waters are coming in!” And in a moment, despair enters and enthrones itself upon the brow, and the hearts of the stern sons of the sea die within them. Beloved, that was the moment of our Lord’s deep, unknown agony, when He could exclaim, “*Save Me, O God, for the waters are come into My soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing. I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow Me. All Your waves and Your billows are gone over Me!*” All this, O child of God, was for *your* soul! It pleased the Lord to crucify Him and put Him to grief for you. By His stripes you are healed. Your healing flows from His wounds, your joy from His sorrow, your glory from His abasement, your riches from His poverty; your hope beams through the darkness which enshrouds His holy soul. Oh, was ever love like Christ’s love? In what else can we resolve all this mystery of unknown agony—of intense, unparalleled suffering, but in the “*love of Christ which passes knowledge.*” “*Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it.*” O mystery of suffering! O deeper mystery of love!

But these sufferings now are over. Hear him cry—“It is finished!”

Have you ever stood by the dying bed of one you have loved—and have marked the throb, the throes of agony, the maddening convulsion, the terrible shaking of the earthly tabernacle as pin after pin, and beam after beam has fallen a shattered wreck; and as you caught the last breath that floated from the pale, quivering lips and closed those eyes in death, has not your heart in the depth of its grief felt something like a thrill of joy and gladness that the sufferings of the loved one now were over? Rejoice then—rejoice that the sufferings of Jesus are finished; that the storm and the tempest will no more beat around Him! The sun of God's love shall no more darken over Him, for He took the cup, pressed it to His lips, exhausted the last bitter drop, and then shouted out in words that made heaven reverberate with its melody, and hell to ring with its mightiness, "It is finished!" Child of sorrow, child of suffering, rejoice that the sufferings of your Lord are over, and that in all the suffering, and all the trial, and all the sorrow through which He leads you home to Himself, has not one drop of the curse to embitter it; has not one particle of the sufferings He endured. He took your cup of grief, your cup of the curse, pressed it to His lips, drank it to its dregs, then filled it with His sweet, pardoning, sympathizing love, and gave it back for you to drink, and to drink forever.

II. Secondly, and more briefly, "It is finished" is not only the cry of a sufferer, it is **THE LANGUAGE OF A SAVIOR.**

Our Lord's mission to our world was simply and singularly to save. He came for no other objective than to save man, to give His life a ransom for many; to provide, to execute an expedient devised in the eternal council, and purpose, and love of the triune God, for securing the full redemption of His Church—an expedient that should harmonize and unite all the moral attributes and perfections of His being, and then lower from the battlement of heaven to sin's fathomless depths the

golden chain of mercy, pardoning mercy, to which, if in faith you take hold, it will lift you up to the throne from where it came! It is the fashion of the present day to ignore the Saviorship of Jesus, and to represent His person, and His life, and His death in any and every form, rather than acknowledge that He died on the cross in the character of a Savior, and that faith in the merits of His obedience and in the efficacy of His death, constitute the only basis on which a lost sinner can build his hope of heaven. I ask you, my beloved hearers, what is the grand objective of modern heresy but to undermine the cross of Christ, to ignore the sacrifice of His death, to blot out the glorious atonement, and to reduce the splendid paraphernalia of Calvary, with all its moral and sublime results, to a mere nonentity? His death, His obedience was the obedience of the law-maker in the form of the law-fulfiller to a law which man had broken and violated; and that perfect and complete obedience of that broken law is the righteousness that justifies the ungodly, and places him who believes spotless before God. Hold fast that truth—the imputed righteousness of the Lord our righteousness worked out and complete in His perfect obedience to the precepts of a broken law. His death on Calvary was atonement to Divine justice; the shedding of His blood was for the remission of man's sins; the paying out of His soul to death was the perfect honor given to the moral government of Jehovah. And when He went out of the streets of Jerusalem staggering beneath the beam on which He was to be impaled; when, with lowly footsteps, He ascended that sacred hill, Calvary; when there, like a lamb led to the slaughter, He gave Himself up uncomplainingly, unreservedly into the hands of His executioners! When they stretched Him on that tree, transfixed His limbs to those beams, lifted it, and let it fall into the place excavated for it to stand; when there the Son of God poured out His holy soul unto death—oh, my brothers

and sisters, it was to harmonize justice and mercy, holiness and truth, to blend in one vast bow of hope all these Divine attributes, that they might span the moral heaven, and encircle our lost humanity! It was then He gave up His soul unto death, and offered up that sacrifice for sin, which man, in his madness, folly, and infidelity, dares in this, our day, to ignore and to deny!

Yes, it is the language of a Savior. Those words speak hope to the hopeless, pardon to the guilty, acceptance to the lost; they tell you, O poor sin-smitten, burdened sinner, that there is hope! There is pardon even for *you*! He has finished all that justice asked, that the law demanded; He has finished the mission His Father had confided to His hands; He has finished the grand oblation that was to restore to God's moral government the glory it had lost in man's apostasy. He has finished all the ancient types, predictions and shadows; He has torn the veil in two, and opened the bright pathway for the sinner to retrace his steps back to paradise, back to God, and once more feel the warm embrace of his Father's forgiving love. And yet this is the work, this is the atonement, this is the sacrifice which modern essayists dare with scorn and unbelief to trample beneath their feet! Oh, it is the language of a Savior which bids you come! Poor broken-hearted sinners, with all your burden of sin, believe and be saved! It bids you come without money and without price; it tells you the blood He poured from His broken heart can wash out and cancel the deepest stain that is on your soul; it tells you there is room in that bosom which He laid bare to the lightning-stroke of God's wrath; it tells you, dry your tears, embrace the cross, trust in the finished work of Christ; fling to the heavens all your own righteousness, wrap yourself up by faith in the righteousness of Christ, and all the choirs of heaven shall tune their harps of gold, and make the heavens reverberate with their songs of praise over your submission in faith to the atonement of the Son of God!

III. Lastly and only one word or two on this—it is **THE SHOUT OF A CONQUEROR.**

Christ was a man of war, our glorious Joshua was He; He had come to gird on the sword, to invest Himself with the armor, and to go out and battle with Satan, with sin and with hell. It was a terrible conflict, it was a fearful battle, but He girded Himself for the mighty and the solemn work, and He completed it; He finished it. He met His foes on the battlefield, confronted all His enemies, and on the cross He destroyed—He divested death of its sting, triumphed over Satan, the grave, and hell, and as He expired, He exclaimed, “It is finished!” Oh what a sublime conflict was that, my brothers and sisters, when the Captain of our salvation met single-handedly. and overcame the powers of darkness, fought the fight, won the victory, and died, saying, “It is finished!”

With two or three brief inferences from the subject I will close.

1. *What a spring of comfort flows from it to the true believer amid his innumerable failures, flaws, and imperfections.* What service do you perform, what duty do you discharge of which you can say, “It is finished”? Alas, not one! Your service is imperfect, your obedience is incomplete, your love is fluctuating, yes, upon it all are the visible marks of human defilement and defect. But here is the work which God most delights in, “finished.” *“You are complete in Him.”* Turn, then, your eyes of faith out of *yourself*, and off of all your own doings, and deal more immediately, closely, and obediently with the finished work of Immanuel. Come away from your fickle love, from your weak faith, from your little fruitfulness, from your uneven walk, from all your shortcomings and imperfections, and let your eyes of faith repose where God’s eyes of satisfied love reposes—on the finished work of Jesus. God beholds you only in Christ—it is

not upon *you* He looks, but on His beloved Son, and upon you in Him, “Wherein He has made us accepted in the beloved.”

2. *If Christ's atoning work is finished, what folly and what sin to attempt to supplement it!* What vast numbers are doing this! Away with your tears, your confessions, your duties, your charities, even your repentance and faith, if these things dare to take their place side by side with the finished work of Christ! See that you attempt to add *nothing* to it. In a similar strain of exhortation let me—

3. *Warn you of the utter worthlessness and fallacy of all grounds of faith, and of all human hope that comes in conflict with the finished work of Christ.* My dear hearers, you have nothing to do in the great matter of your salvation, but to accept in faith the one offering made once and for all by God manifest in your nature. Cast your deadly doings at the foot of the cross; cease from your own works; cease from your own righteousness; cease from resting in your confessions, in your tears, in your prayers, in your going to your church or your chapel. Oh, cease from all this, and in simple faith accept—take hold of— the Divine work of the Lord Jesus Christ! God needs no more sacrifices; God asks no other atonement; God looks for nothing on your part to propitiate His regard, or present you with acceptance; He is satisfied with the Divine work of Christ—with His obedience—and with His blood-shedding. And if tonight, sin-burdened and distressed one, you will renounce all your own doings, and rest in the finished work of Christ—the one eternal redemption He has offered—God will expand His arms of love, and embrace you, take you into a covenant, filial relation to Himself; and from that moment your path to eternity will be like the sun, growing brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. All is done! Christ has done all. Christ has suffered all—all He asks of you is in faith to receive His glorious sacrifice. Believe in Him, and be saved!

Beware of the errors of the day, the tendency of which is to veil the light and glory of Christ's finished work, and to mislead, misguide, and misdirect souls on their way to the judgment seat. The fact is too patent to ignore, and it would be affectation to veil it—that there exists at the present moment, a theological school in our land—which by the press is endeavoring to circulate doctrines and statements which go to undermine the Divine inspiration and authority of the Bible, and to cast the pall of darkness, and of death over the splendors of the cross. I warn you of these terrorists, and against their errors. Deceitful men, false to your Master, and unfaithful to His truth! You may attempt to veil the luster of the cross, you may sepulcher incarnate truth, roll upon it your stone, seal it, and set your watch, but the truth of God shall leap from the dark chamber in which you attempt to entomb it, and shall walk this earth again—a thing of life, light and beauty! Rejoice, O Christian, that all these attempts to subvert the truth as it is in Jesus, God will laugh to scorn, and finally His gospel shall fully and universally prevail—

“Truth crushed to earth, shall rise again!
The eternal years of God are hers;
But error wounded writhes in pain,
And dies amid her worshippers!

And now, from my heart I ask the blessing of the triune God upon my beloved brother, the grand substance of whose ministry I believe from my very soul is to exalt the finished work of Jesus. And I pray that this noble edifice, reared in the name, and consecrated to the glory of the triune God, may for many years echo and re-echo with his voice of melody and of power in expounding to you the glorious doctrines and precepts of Christ's one finished atonement. And God grant

that none of you may be found rejecting to your everlasting woe the doctrine of the cross. You may attempt to laugh it to scorn; you may make your excuses for its rejection; but the hour is coming, yes, the hour is near, when death confronting you—the veil falling upon all earthly scenes, rising upon all eternal realities—you will discover the unbelief and slander that could trifle with the atonement, dispute it in life, and in health, fail you in your solemn hour, and you will find yourself on the brink of eternity, without a plank, without a lifeboat, without a star of hope to cheer the dark spirit's travel to the court of God! Reject it; deny it at your peril; your blood be upon your own heads. And may God grant in His grace, that before long you who have believed in Him, confessed Him, and loved Him here on earth, may cluster around His throne, gaze upon His unclouded face, unite in the anthem of the blessed, and from those lips which once uttered that glorious sentence—"It is finished," receive the "Well done, good and faithful servant;" "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundations of the world." And to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, we will all unite in one eternal ascription of praise. Amen.

379 PERFECT CLEANSING – JOEL 3:21

**A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Morning, April 7th, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed.” —
Joel 3:21**

SOME THINK that this text has reference to the blood of the persecuted and martyred Israel. God had by terrible judgments avenged Himself of the different nations who had carried His people captive, and according to some expositors, in this verse He threatens to make His vengeance complete. If there is any blood which still cries from the ground, if there are any martyrs whose murders have not been punished upon their persecutors, God vows that He will cleanse their blood which He had not as yet cleansed. We shall however, this morning, take the text in a simpler and I think after a more spiritual sort. It is a great truth of God which lies at the foundation of the gospel system, that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanses us from all sin. When a man is washed in the sacred laver which is filled with the blood of the atonement, he is not partially cleansed, but he is thoroughly cleansed. Not so much as the shadow of a spot remains upon the blood-washed. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.” If that cleansing were partial, it was of no use. If it left but one sin still upon us in the sight of God, it would have no power to save. It is only because, when once applied

by the Holy Spirit and received by faith, it makes a total, and complete cleansing from all past guilt, that it is of any use whatever to the poor trembling conscience of the distressed sinner. Let us lay it down, then, in our own minds as a settled fact which neither our experience nor any of the teachings of many heretics shall make us let go, that he who by faith lays hold on Christ, has his blood cleansed in that same hour, and all his iniquities are put away. But in what light, then, are we to understand the text? For it says, “I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed.” Well, this may refer perhaps to the uncalled among God’s elect. They are not as yet cleansed. Their faith has not as yet descended into the sacred pool of blood. They still stand in their iniquities, and in their transgressions, unconscious of their lost estate, and now God gives an absolute promise to the rest of His chosen that they shall in due time be brought in! They shall repent. “A new heart also will I give them, and a right spirit will I put within them, and I will sprinkle pure water upon them and they shall be clean. From all their iniquities and from all their transgressions will I cleanse them.” It is not a matter of doubt as to whether the uncalled as yet shall or shall not be saved. If God has chosen them, He will call them, for whom He did predestinate, “them He also called, and whom He called, them He also justified.” This stands as a part of the divine decree, and as an absolute promise uttered by the lips of divine sovereignty. “As for the rest of My elect as yet unwashed, as yet unsaved from all their iniquities, I will cleanse their blood which I have not cleansed.” But I think I shall only be speaking the mind of the Spirit, if I say this is not the first meaning of the text. I shall confine myself, this morning, to two thoughts which I think very naturally arise out of it. There are two senses in which believers in Christ have blood which as yet has not been cleansed, and to these two senses our text has especial reference.

First, there remains still on the minds of some of the regenerate *a certain consciousness of sin*—their conscience has not been thoroughly purged from dead works. And secondly, it is an undoubted fact, that in the nature even of the regenerate, there still remains the *black drop of the old depraved blood which needs to be cleansed away, and which according to this promise shall soon be removed.*

I. We shall commence with the first sense—GUILT UPON THE CONSCIENCE.

The promise is given to believers who have any guilt still remaining upon their troubled consciences, “I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed.” If our faith were what it should be, we would know that there is no condemnation against the man who believes in Christ. If our faith were always simple, and had a clear eye to look alone to the Savior, we would always view ourselves as being, in the sight of God, accepted in the beloved. But our faith partakes of the frailty of our nature. It is often trembling; it sometimes staggers at the promise, and then in such moods, and in such hours, there comes upon the conscience a sense of sin to a greater or less degree. The soul is still justified, but doubts its justification; it is still accepted, but that acceptance is not so clearly read by its eye as to be to it a matter of certainty, and a cause of joy. Now, brothers and sisters, I think I can soon prove that very many of us have some guilt remaining upon our conscience. Let me ask you in the first place, what is it that makes us doubt our eternal salvation? We have believed in Christ—

“Our hope is fixed on nothing less,
Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness,”

and yet we doubt. We have come to the cross—we look to it as being all our salvation, and all our desire, yet we are

troubled at heart—dark suspicions flit across our soul, and we ask, “If it is so, why am I thus?” Now, what does this indicate but that there is some guilt still remaining on our conscience? If we knew ourselves to be what we really are; if we are believers, guiltless, innocent, and pure, clean in every way, do you think we should have any doubt of our salvation? If we could look upon ourselves in Christ as being without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing—and that is what we are if we believe in Him—do you think there would be a shadow of a shade of suspicion as to our eternal salvation? No. It is because the conscience knows some secret stain—because the black fingerprints of sin are not completely washed out, that we fear lest after all sin should involve punishment, and punishment should cast us into hell. Oh, that this blood upon the conscience were cleansed away, and we would never, never doubt again!

And then again, let me ask you; are there not times when you think very harshly of God? You think, perhaps, that He deals severely with you; that He will not deliver you out of this seventh trouble; that He will let you sink at last, and perish in the deep waters, where the floods shall overflow you. You come to think of Him, not as a tender Father, but as, to say the least of it, a severe taskmaster; you come to think that one of these dark days He will shut His eyes of love, withdraw His hand of power, and suspend the sympathies of His heart! Do you suppose you would have any of these thoughts of God if you knew yourself to be perfectly cleansed by Him? No, you would say, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord.” You would be willing to leave everything in His hands, but the dark thought that there *is* sin in you, and that God is punishing you for that sin—that in that chastisement, there is mixed something penal—that in the smiting of the Father’s rod, there is something of the severity

of the judge's hand, betrays the fact that your conscience is not thoroughly cleansed from sin. If it were, you would know that every affliction was but love; that every blow was but another form of a caress; that your troubles were not punishments, but chastisements; not penal inflictions, but the Loving deeds of a tender Father who longed to make you perfect like Himself.

Still further, why is it that so many of us dare not indulge in close access to our God? We pray, but it is often to a distant God, as to one who stands upon a mountain beyond our reach! How few of us come like a child to his Father, and lay hold on God as one who is near to us by ties of divine affinity. The most of Christians, I fear, are outer-court worshippers; they stand in the place of the priests, but they never come to stand where the high priest stood, within the veil. Luther was a man who used familiarities with God, and if some of us had heard Luther praying, we would have been shocked—"Oh," we would have said, "how dare he talk thus with God?" But Luther knew that he was completely justified, that there was no sin on him, and therefore, he did not tremble when he stood near to the Holy, the Perfect, and the Just. If I know that there is no sin remaining, but that all has been washed away, why need I fear? I may go the throne of God and cry, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Not God, for He has justified, nor Christ, for He has died." Once let the soul have perfect peace through believing in its perfect purity in Christ, and the nearness of our access will be perfectly wonderful! The boldness of our fellowship will make us look with wonder, and even Christians will be astonished that we dare to indulge in such a holy familiarity with God, and talk so plainly with our Father—with our *friend*. There is still guilt upon the conscience of many professors, and it is proved by the fact that they fear to have a near approach to God.

How frequently does this lurking evil betray itself in another form! There is a promise before you— an exceedingly great and precious promise. Why do you not lay hold upon it? Why not receive it in all its length and breadth, and call it your own? “Oh,” you say, “but I am so unworthy. How shall I take such a promise? I, so unbelieving, so ungrateful, so unheavenly, how can I think that such a promise is made to me? It is too good, too great for such a one as I am.” Do you not perceive that when you say, “unworthy,” you are acting as though you were under the covenant of works, instead of being under the covenant of grace? What has your worthiness to do with it, or your unworthiness either? God did not choose you for your worthiness—Christ did not purchase you from your goodness. The Holy Spirit did not call you because of your excellences, nor will you be saved because of any inherent virtue in you! You betray at once, I say, the sad fact that there is some consciousness of evil still remaining upon you; oh, if your heart knew itself to be wholly purged from dead works, and freed from sin, you could walk at large; if no more a criminal, but absolved, pardoned and acquitted, you have leave to roam throughout all the rooms of your Father’s palace, and to take hold upon all your Father’s riches as His heir, yes— joint-heir with Christ—you would never stagger at the promise because of its greatness, but account it all the more true because its greatness proves that it came from a great God who has great faithfulness, and great power to fulfill! Precious, precious promise, “I will cleanse their blood which I have not cleansed.” I will make your conscience yet so pure of sin that you can take the promise and believe it to be all your own.

Yet once more. There is another fact which demonstrates at once that the conscience of some believers is not totally purged from sin. Why is my sister yonder afraid to die? Why does my brother there tremble when he knows that he carries

a disease about him which may all of a sudden launch him into eternity? My brother, if you will probe that fear of yours to the bottom, you will find the old venom of some guilt still upon the conscience! Let us suppose that the promise of the text is fulfilled in you, and that you know *today* that there is no sin against you in God's book—that you feel *today* that you are perfectly freed from the consequences and the guilt of sin through the substitution of Christ. I defy you to be afraid of dying after that! The two things could not stand together! Sin is the sting of death, and the strength of sin is the law. But when sin is removed, what is it but a serpent without its fangs, a thing which a child may play with, and not that a man must tremble at? What? When the dragon's teeth are broken, and we know it, shall we be afraid? When death is no more the gate of gloom, but the portal of the skies, and we know it, shall we tremble then? God forbid that I should allow the thought! No. Perfectly pardoned, with a conscience recognizing, and rejoicing in that perfect pardon, all fears of death would be impossible! There would even be a longing and a thirsting after death, not that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up in life. We would have a *desire* to depart and be with Christ, which is far better! Do not think my brothers and sisters, after the five reasons which I have given, that any of you would be willing to say, "I am guiltless there." We have guilt, many of us, still upon our conscience, because we at times doubt our salvation. Often, we have harsh thoughts of God. We sometimes neglect to approach near to the mercy seat. We often tremble to take the promise at the fullest. We are afraid of dying. All these prove that the blood is not entirely cleansed from off the conscience.

Having thus proved the *necessity* of the promise, let us sit still a moment, chew the cud of meditation, put the promise into our mouth, and taste its preciousness. Great God! You will

yet by Your grace take from my conscience, and the conscience of all Your people every stain of sin! And what then, beloved? What then? Let these thoughts charm you. When once the last stain of sin is removed, then you will never have a doubt; you will triumph in full assurance. Who can doubt when sin is washed away? It shall not be partly day, and partly night with you when this promise is fulfilled. Your night shall be turned into day, and the light of your day shall be as though there were seven suns. You shall sing with Toplady—

“My name from the palm of His hands
Eternity cannot erase!
Impressed on His heart it remains
In marks of indelible grace.”

You shall know that heaven might sooner pass away than your soul be imperiled; that for us the very throne of God is a security of life. Because He lives, you must also live, and because He reigns, you must reign with Him. I pray that promise over till I have it fulfilled to me, because I know that in that hour all my doubts shall be brought out to execution, shall be hung on Haman’s gallows, and shall never trouble me any more. And what next, beloved, if this promise is fulfilled? Why, then, we shall praise the Lord with gladness. No more harsh thoughts of Him! Our life shall be one Psalm. We shall sing in our hearts, and sing with our lips, and each day shall be a note, when sin is pardoned—

“How sweet the song there’s none can say,
But those whose sins are washed away
Who feel the same within.”

I believe that the shouts of angels are not as glorious as will be the songs of the redeemed, because those songs shall warble from blood-washed lips! Oh, cannot you and I sing! We cannot get our praise out as we would. It is too big for expression when once we know beyond hesitation or suspicion that every sin is gone, and can say, “Great God, I am clean. Through Jesus’ blood I am clean!” But more than this—to put each point in opposition to those evil things which prove sin to be still on your conscience, let it be removed, and what nearness to God will you have? Holy souls must come together; there is a mutual attraction between a holy God and a holy being. It were impossible for a perfect being to be far removed from Him who is perfection’s self, and once let you and I know our perfect justification in Christ, and far from God we could *not* live! Just as the needle seeks its pole, so should we seek our God; as the dove flies to the dovecot, so would our perfect spirit fly to the bosom of a perfect God. It were impossible for us to be far from God when purity has covered us, and the righteousness of Jesus is plainly seen, and then, my brethren, enjoying this nearness of access to God, we would never be afraid to take the promise. Adam, I think, never trembled to pluck the pomegranate or to crush the grape; he was a perfect man, and he knew that the bounties of God’s providence in Eden’s garden were his own. And when you and I are perfectly justified, and our conscience knows it, we shall take God’s mercies with a thankful hand, we shall lay hold upon His promises with a firm grasp. The sin that made us tremble to lay hold being all withdrawn, we shall take the promise with a grip that death and hell can never loose, and say, “It is mine, for I am cleansed in Christ!” Then, no fear of death will ever disturb us; our cleansed spirit will not dread the Jordan, but long to pass through its streams; the fetter of sin broken, we shall never fear the loss of liberty. If the *great* enemy, Sin, has been

conquered, we shall not feel the *little* enemy, Death; if the hell within us has been quenched, we shall know that there can be no hell without for us; we shall long for evening to undress, that we may rest with God, and having on the wedding garment, we shall be ready to enter into the marriage supper with shouts and joy—with a heart full of thanksgiving! O Lord, fulfill unto us this Your promise whereon You have caused us to hope, and from our conscience cleanse that blood-guiltiness which as yet has not been cleansed, and so will we praise and magnify You forever and ever!

But secondly, I think the text has perhaps a yet more pointed bearing upon our *sanctification* than upon our justification. It is thrice blessed to live daily and continually under a system of divine grace which gives a perfect deliverance from the *guilt* of sin; but this can never be separated from the desire to know the dispensation in its deliverance from the *power* of sin. If any man hopes to be saved from punishment, and yet to hold with sin as his friend, that man's hope is a delusion! The Lord Jesus came into the world to save His people *from* their sins, not *in* their sins. He who breaks the chain kills the tyrant master. When you and I are delivered from the taskmaster's lash, we must be delivered from the taskmaster's *labor*—but it is a fact that God's people, though perfectly justified and clean—are none of them here on earth perfectly sanctified! All dreams about perfect sanctification here are dreams, indeed! In fact, I find upon conversing with those brethren who believe in perfection, that they only mean this—that men may come into such a state of grace that the spirit of God will keep them from the cross of sin, and they shall finally persevere. I believe the *perfection* of the Wesleyan is nothing more than the *justification* of a Calvinist! The Wesleyan makes a mistake in the use of terms. If he were put to a school of a good theologian, he would speak more plainly what he meant, and

we should find that we did not differ. In the sense many Wesleyans use the term, “perfect,” I do not hesitate to say that I know thousands of perfect men, completely justified men, whose lives outwardly are free from any sin which the world could detect, and men whose private conversation is such, that if it were matched by any man, you would scarcely detect any flaw against which a worldling might exclaim. But my dear friends, I think you and I, knowing a little about ourselves, are ready to frankly confess that there is much blood in us that is not yet cleansed.

The corruption of the flesh remains even in the regenerate. Let me, in a sorrowful spirit, show some of those signs which prove to us the indwelling of sin. Sometimes our old nature betrays us into great and sudden sin. Have you a hasty temper? Have you ever risen in the morning, and prayed to have it subdued, and you have gone on and everything has been as smooth as possible? But suddenly a squall has come, and before you knew it, you had lost your balance and had been carried away by the winds! I don't think I ever grieved one-millionth part as much from any hurt my feelings ever had for another man, as I have done when I have hurt another man's feelings. Another man may hurt me as much as he likes, I defy him to hurt me now, but when I have been betrayed into a hasty word in reply, I have often felt more sadness of spirit than I could tell. And yet each of us knows that with the very best intentions, resolving against this evil nature of ours, there are seasons when suddenly it overwhelms us, and takes us by storm! Perhaps, however, your temptation is of another class, not with temper, but with some other frailty of your minds. Oh, have we not sometimes tossed on our beds sleepless because our eyes would not shut, for they were bursting with tears? We have done that which our soul hated. We have said, “I would sooner have lost my right hand than have said what I have said, or have

done what I have done. Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” If any of you can live without sin, I wish I knew your secret. If you can at all times maintain the same purity of heart, the same loveliness of disposition, the same charity of carriage, the same holiness of bearing, I would to God that I, too, might sit where you have sat to learn the lesson which you have learnt so well! But I half suspect you have not seen yourself as you should have seen yourself, or else you would scarcely venture to boast of such proficiency in the gospel school. But my brothers and sisters, when our old evil nature does not throw us into the ditch, and muddy us from head to foot, yet how every day it stains us! That everyday sin; that sin which gets into the closet; that evil which creeps into our very bed, which has a chair for itself at all our tables; that evil which goes with us into the market, haunts us in the street, follows us into the family, sits at the fireside, or goes with us into the throng—that evil which penetrates the house of God, gets into the Church meeting, follows us even in prayer and in praise, and tries to spoil all that we do. Oh, I am sure if you have watched yourself with but half an eye, you must feel that in those daily acts, which the ungodly call “trifles,” but which you know to be solemn things, there are signs that there is blood in you which has not been cleansed! How often does this evil come upon us so as to disable us when we need the most spiritual strength! There is the angel, and I would wrestle with Him, but sin has cut my sinew, and I cannot wrestle as I should. There is the throne, and I would sing, but sin has made my voice hoarse and my spirit dull; the strings of my harp are loose, so that I cannot send forth music as I would. There are sinners to be saved. My heart will not melt with compassion; my eyes will not flow with tears; there are many to be addressed in the ministry, but sin takes away our power to plead for God as we would. We can’t be Baxters; we can’t

feel that soul-moving compassion for the redemption of sinners which we should feel. Have not you, each of you, felt that if you did not hate sin for anything else, you must hate it because it would not let you serve God, and serve His Church as you would desire? When you want to be Davids, in comes Satan, steals your sling and your stone. When you would be like Jael, sin mislays the hammer, and hides away the nail! When you would smite the Philistines with the ox-goad of Shamgar, there may be the ox-goad, but you have not strength or courage to wield it. Sin! Sin! You accursed thing, you have desecrated the house of God; you have climbed the sacred heights of Zion; you have spit your venom upon the burnt offerings of David's self. Yes, you have gone up to Tabor's summit, and when we have been rapt and transfigured, even then we have heard the moving of your wings, and the dark shadow of your evil influence has crept over our spirits! Oh, we have plenty of reasons in our best frames as well as in our worst to confess that there is blood in us that is not as yet cleansed!

More arguments you do not need, but if you wanted one more, I might give it you in this. Why do we ever doubt our God? Some men make light of doubts as though they were little sins. To doubt God is the most damnable of crimes! There is no iniquity which has in it a greater blackness of rebellion against God than mistrustful thoughts of His goodness, and His faithfulness. Unbelief stabs at every attribute of God! Pride does but smites His crown. Lust does but tread upon the pure whiteness of His garment. But unbelief would snatch from His hand His scepter; from His head His crown; no, it would shake the very foundation of the throne itself! Now, why is it that we ever doubt God? We have no *cause* to doubt Him. He has never been ungenerous or unkind. The only answer we can give is that we still have an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. There is still the house of Saul within our coasts.

There is still the old Adam, still the deadly principle which needs to be cut up, root and branch and to be totally eradicated; and so may God cleanse in us the blood which He has not cleansed.

II. Having thus endeavored to prove that there is blood in us in the matter of sanctification which is not cleansed, I take the promise just as we find it, and read it through again: “For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed; for the Lord dwells in Zion.” So then, one of these days, there will be no propensity to sin left in any one of God’s people. Then, it is true, after all, that perfection is possible, and is attainable, for it is *guaranteed* to us in that verse! And God will as surely give what He promises, as He has greatly given what He promised in the old time. It is a great doctrine of the Christian religion which ought always to be kept prominent, that everyone who believes in Christ, by believing, receives a promise of being totally set free from the indwelling of sin in his nature. But how is this to be done? There is a great dispute about progressive sanctification. Some of us take one view of it, and some another. I will endeavor to give you mine.

And first, the purging of true nature will not be done in the Antinomian way, by calling good evil, and evil good. That theory, as I have heard it expounded by some, is something like this—let a child of God do what he will, what was sin in another man, is no sin in *him*. That is to say, in other terms, that darkness in a child of God is light; that bitter in a child of God is sweet; that injustice—what would be injustice in another man—is justice in him! What would make another man a rogue, still leaves him honest. If any of you believe such villainous blasphemy as that, the sooner you drive it out of your mind, the better. There is a dreadful woe against that man who removes his neighbor’s landmark—how much more against the man who, under pretense of gospel teaching, would sap the

foundations which divide morality from immorality, and righteousness from vice. Sin, in a child of God, is sin—as damnable a sin as it would have been in the most accursed of the profane! The reason why it does not destroy you is not because it has ceased to be a deadly poison itself, but because of the grace of God which has given Christ to be the propitiation for our sins, which is a most blessed antidote.

Neither is the way in which the blood of believers is cleansed, as some say, by the changing of their old nature. The old nature never did change, and never will. Old Adam, ever since he fell, was earthly, sensual, and devilish. He will be the same as long as we live, depend on it! Brothers and sisters, the common experience of Christians proves that their *nature* does not get any better. You know how our aged friends pray at the prayer meetings. They generally ask that the young may be kept in the slippery paths of youth. I do not hesitate to say that the paths of youth, though slippery, are not more slippery than those of old age. Look at Scriptural history! Who were the great sinners mentioned there in the Church of Christ? Not a solitary young man is there mentioned as having disgraced his profession. See David. While he was a young man, he stood. It was in his declining years, that he committed that great sin with Bathsheba. I do not read of Noah, that he was ever drunk as a young man. It was when he was old, and his children were all grown about him, that he fell into that iniquity! Was Peter a lad? Was Judas a child? No. Bible history goes to show this, that if there is one period of human life more dangerous than another, it is when men think themselves to be out of danger—dreaming that their *nature* is improved! Ask the venerable men to speak for themselves. It ill becomes the youth to bring an accusation against the hoary head; but let them be their own witnesses. They will tell you that the fires they have seen to tremble in ashes are still as full of power to devour as they were when they

blazed up in the first flames of early youth! They will assure you—for I know, and often hear their testimony, that they need as much to be kept by the aid of divine grace at the age of seventy, as they did at seventeen—that at eighty, they will become, unless grace keeps them, as fit fuel for the flame, as they might have done at twenty-eight! Oh, yes, my brothers and sisters, ask the Church, and they will tell you that the fiction of the old nature getting better is a fiction without a foot to stand upon. They will tell you that old Adam always is, and always will be an enemy to the cross of Christ, the friend of sin, and the hater of all that is good.

And yet once again—the way in which God cleanses our blood is not by making the *new nature* any better. Believers are partakers of the divine nature. That divine nature as divine cannot be improved. The new principle which God implants in regeneration is as good as it can be. We are told it is a seed. That seed which cannot sin because it is born of God. *The old nature cannot be good; the new nature cannot be bad.* The new nature can by no means sin, for it is a spark of the divine purity. It can by no means fall, for it has in it immortality, and life of perfection. “But,” you say to me, “How then, how then is our blood to be purged?” You have perceived in yourself that daily these two principles come into collision. The old Adam wants his way; the new Adam will have his way. They fight, they struggle, they are contrary the one to the other. We are afflicted, we mourn and weep, “When we would do good, evil is present with us.” How to will we find; but how to perform we find not. The evil that we would not, that we do, and the good that we would do, we often do not. So then, we find a law in our members warring against the law of our members. This will go on to the last, and on your dying bed it may be you will have as sore a conflict as you ever had while you were in health. John Knox said his sharpest spiritual struggle was his last. The old

nature said to him, “John Knox, you have never feared the face of man, you have worked a great work in Scotland; you have some merits of your own.” And the new nature said, “No, John Knox, you must be saved as a sinner resting simply on the merits of Christ,” and it was as much as the new nature could do to tread out the last spark of the self-righteousness of the old Adam, but it did; and blessed be God, it shall be done in each of us, and, in the last moment, when we leave our body, we shall leave our sin behind! When we shall leave off this mortal coil, the dust that is in the garment shall be shaken off, too; when we are disembodied, we shall be disembodied of the body of this death of sin; when we stand in heaven, we shall bear the image of the heavenly, and cease to bear the image of the earthy. We shall be changed, we shall be made like unto the quickening Spirit, and no more be merely as the living soul. We shall receive our second nature in all its fullness, while the first and fallen nature shall be shaken off and done with, and put away as filthy rags—only fit for the destroying dunghill—and we shall be *clean*! “I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed.”

Brothers and sisters, I was dreaming, dreaming of what would be the consequence if now our blood could be cleansed. We are assembled here as a mighty congregation. Oh, if the minister's blood were wholly cleansed! A perfect minister! What a pulpit! What a power! What a very incarnation of the love of Christ would there be! No fear of discord then. The shepherd's presence in the midst of his flock would surely prevent all divisions. No hard words would ever come from His lips. All would be kindness, sympathy and Christ-like affection. And what preaching! What exhortations to Christians! What solemn earnestness and what pleading with sinners! What tearful eyes! What a melting heart! What moving periods! What rousing thunders! What cheering syllables of consolation! Oh

God, I would Your promise were fulfilled to *me*! “I will cleanse their blood which I have not cleansed.” And what a consequence if the deacons and elders had their blood cleansed, too! No mistakes then. We are fallible now because we are sinful men. What priests of the flock! What overseers of God’s house! What examples to you all! What pillars of light! What flaming torches of devotion! How they would be like the horses of Pharaoh’s chariot, glorious as they were strong, and strong as they would be pure! Oh, would that the prayer was fulfilled in *them*, “I will cleanse their blood which is not cleansed.” And what a Church we would be! Perfect members, freed from sin! No denominations would break up into sections. There would be no denominations! Christ would be the one head, and there would be no party names. A perfect believer! What a power would he be against the darkness and the iniquity of this vast city! A perfect church! What joy! What peace! We only need this, we sometimes think, to make a millennium. But indeed, it would not make a millennium. It would make an Aceldama, for the world would be in arms to put to death the perfect ones as they did Christ. It is only Christ’s coming that can make a millennium! And when He shall come with power as well as purity, with reigning sovereignty as well as with wooing love, then shall the Church have her Sabbath, and it shall be said, “Hallelujah! The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ!”

But as I was dreaming, I thought how different everything would be if our blood were wholly cleansed. How sweet would be the bread upon our tables! Is it scant, and is there little of it? What blessed contentment would there be to impart to it a manna-like flavor! Is our house ill-furnished, narrow, and ill-ventilated? If divine grace were in our hearts to perfection, would not that very hovel become a palace, and the dungeon itself glitter with the gems of Paradise? How different would

our trials be! How light! How light! How easily should we endure them! How different our joys; not flashes in the pan, meteors that are and are gone—but as suns shining both by day and night! Oh, if we were perfect, what a different world this would look. We would not be standing on our dignity towards our brethren, we would not be cut up because we were not enough respected. We would not be troubling ourselves because we were not made much of and fussed over. Perfect men would hate such as that, and be ready to be the least among saints, that they might so become the greatest of all. Oh, if we were perfect, what forbearance we would have! What forbearance towards the imperfect ones! Hard words we could afford to smile at. Dark sentences—we would be deaf to them, and the sharpest cuts of sarcasm would only just touch our armor to blunt theirs! With the perfect, this would be a new world, indeed, and if perfect, how new would heaven seem to be to us! There would be rents in the firmament through which we should see the glory of God; there would be windows without curtains or blinds to shut out the vision of angels and of the King of kings; a perfect eye would see through clouds and mists, and see God Himself, and all the glories of the court! And how different would hell itself seem to a perfect man! How awful and tremendous! What thoughts would he have of the sin which had dug the pit of hell, and of the iniquity which piled the fuel, and of the justice which like a stream of fire had kindled it. Let us but mount to perfection, and we come to the highest degree of intellectual and spiritual attainment. We would not be what we are now—blind, deaf, dumb, halt, weak, dead—we would be full of all that life can mean! A quickened eye, a purified pulse would surely bring forth perfection in every other faculty—

“O happy hour, O blest abode!
I shall be near and like my God.
And death and hell no more annoy
The solid pleasure of my joy.”

Hasten this, oh God, hasten it in Your own time!

Well now—there is one of you who says, “Well, I shall never get there—perfection is too high for me. No, sir, I can never think that I shall be perfectly free from sin.” You shall be though, and that for these reasons. First, Christ purposes to do it. He loves His Church and gave Himself for it, that He might present it to Himself a *perfect* Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. That is His purpose, and He’ll do it. But, next, the Spirit has engaged to do it. He has come into this world like purifying rain; He has come to take the flint away that would not be refined, and put into your soul a new and heavenly mind. Now, what Jesus purposes, and what the Spirit works can surely be accomplished! Besides that, heaven requires it! “There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defiles.” You must be perfect, then, to enter there. More than this, God’s honor needs it. Unless He utterly destroys the works of the devil, His honor is not perfect. If He does not make you completely free from all sin of every kind, then Christ has not completed His work, and “It is finished!” was but an empty brag. His honor requires it! Put your hand upon that promise and say, “His promise certifies it.” I cannot see how. I can scarcely tell why; it seems impossible. My soul can scarcely get the thought into its mind. But, great God, with my finger this day upon that promise, I do believe that You will cleanse my blood which You have not cleansed, and I shall at length be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, accepted in the beloved!

Now, brothers and sisters, how shall I conclude except with a practical exhortation? What then? If it is promised to us that the old nature shall thus be removed, and we shall be purged, what then? Why, then, let us struggle against our corruption, because we shall get the victory. Nothing makes a man fight like the hope of getting the victory. When poor soldiers feel that it is of no use, then they are only too glad to hear the trumpet sound a retreat; but when they are confident of victory, how they draw their swords, how they hasten to the struggle, how they weary not of the fight! Even now, today, my soul takes hold upon her sword. Sin, death, and hell I defy you, for I shall bear the palm as surely as I bear the sword! I shall wear the crown as certainly as I agonized unto death! Struggle with yourselves, strive daily to get the mastery of your passions. The victory is sure. Let no discouragement weaken you. “Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might,” for He is able to give you the victory through Jesus Christ your Lord!

And what next? Why, today pray against your corruptions more than ever you have done. You have got a promise to plead. Take it, salt it with your tears; lay it upon the altar; put your hands upon the horns of the altar, and say, “Great God, I will not rise, I will not let You go until I know by Divine assurance that this promise shall be fulfilled to me.” So shall you go forth to your daily struggle with temptation wearing a smile upon your face, and smoothing those wrinkles on your brow. Sorrow does not become the man who has so rich a promise! Be glad. The joy of the Lord shall be your strength. You shall at last win the victory!

Sinner, he who believes in Christ may claim this text for himself. Do you believe? Then this text is yours as well as mine, and shall be fulfilled to everyone of us today, and in the last day, and in day without days in glory everlasting. Amen.

380 MEETING OF OUR OWN CHURCH

Monday Evening, April 8th, 1861, At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

A MEETING, in which it was designed to set forth the independency, harmony, and family character of each Church, was held on Monday evening, April 8th. The Revelation John Spurgeon presided. The meeting was opened with singing and prayer, after which

The Rev. C. H. SPURGEON said before giving up the meeting to the Chairman, I will, as on former occasions, briefly state the subject of it. We have met together during the last two weeks as a part of the Baptist denomination, and as a portion of the one great Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have endeavored to give expression to our firm faith in the unity of all the faithful in Christ. We have sought, moreover, to give prominence to our own distinctive doctrines and forms of worship. We have met here for divers purposes of fellowship and of teaching, and now to-night, the one thought is to be this that the Church of Christ meeting here is within itself a family, that it is whole and entire and needs nothing from without to make it complete. We do not for instance, need to appeal to a synod, or to a general assembly. We do not look up to one minister called a bishop, or to some other person loved an archbishop. The Church has its own bishop or pastor; it has its own presbytery or elders; it has its own deaconship, and is not therefore dependent on any other, but should every other Church become extinct its organization would not be marred. I take it, so far as I have read Scripture, that a modified form of Episcopalian Presbyterian Independency is the Scriptural

method of Church government; at any rate, no other form of government would have worked in so large a Church as this. You have found it necessary to have one who shall be the overseer of the Church under God. You have found it needful to gather a presbytery around him, that they may be with him the pastors of the flock. You believe it also to be exceedingly needful that, the Church should maintain its congregational principles, and yet be ever ready to enter Presbyterian alliance with any other Church, not for its government, but for mutual assistance to be rendered and to be received.

You will have before you to-night, as a representative of the family principle, my own well-beloved father, my brother also sits beside him. To show the union of this Church with the past, as well as with the present, you will have one brother who officiated as minister during the latter years of Dr. Rippon's pastorate, another, Dr. Angus, now the tutor of Regent's-Park College; and then Mr. Smith, whom none of us can ever forget, because he always insists on printing two or three books a year, so that we should always have him in mind, they are full of Gospel doctrine, and are printed at so extraordinarily cheap a rate, that they are scattered about by tens of thousands, and thus his name is had in remembrance. Mr. Walters would have been here to-night but he said, "There is a great work doing in my own Church, and I do not then think I should be justified in sparing the time to come." I thought this a most admirable argument, though I should have been more glad for him to have been one in our midst to-night. We wish him God-speed, and pray that wherever he goes success may attend his labors. I do not think that in the course of the next twenty years, you, as a Church, will have such a choice of pastors as you have had during the last twenty years. If I should die you can do so, I suppose, but I do not think that anything short of that, would get me to go away from this spot. I hardly agree with ministers

when they get beaten, showing the white feather and resigning the charge. I feel I am captain of a vessel, and if there should be Jonah in the ship I shall as gently, and in as Christian a spirit as possible, pitch him out, I shall not think, because Jonah is there, that therefore I ought to get out, but will stand by the ship in ill weather as well as in sunshine. I know that by God's grace I was called to this place, and if God's grace and providence shall move me well and good, but nothing else ever will. I have not the slightest doubt but that; as our numbers shall increase, in answer to earnest prayer, the Spirit of God will be poured out yet more abundantly upon the minister and the people, and that we, being bound together yet more surely in ties of affection and in ties of hearty cooperation, may go from strength to strength in glorifying God and serving one another, Why should not this ancient Church become as glorious in the future as in the past, O may God hear our prayers and it must be so. Jesus shall here be honored and the truth maintained.

The CHAIRMAN. — Christian friends and brethren: I feel to-night that I am not exactly where I ought to be. I feel that I cannot say anything, because I have so many things to say; in fact, I feel too much to be able to say anything, and I am happy to think I have been placed in the chair, because mine will be merely a nominal office. One thing, however, I would say. If we had time, and it was proper, I would speak first of the love of God, and then of his faithfulness. God is love and he says he will withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly. Our earnest prayers — for I speak of my dear partner as well as myself — have often one up to the throne of grace, and we have said, “O Lord, who best led us and fed us all our lives alone, bless the lad.” God has blessed him and can you doubt, my friends, that God is a God hearing and answering prayer? We have prayed that the little one might become a thousand; it has become a thousand, and more than a thousand. God has

given us, and given him, and given you the desire of our hearts. We have seen the foundation-stone of this place laid, and now the topstone is brought forth with shoutings of “Grace, grace unto it.” May God bless you still, and increase you as a flock. I rejoice there is so much harmony between us even though we may differ perhaps, in some points of view, I do not see clearly into this water before me (pointing to the baptistry), but if I did I would go down and be baptized at once. If there are any friends here to-night who have only weighed this matter, and feel that Christ has commanded you to follow him there, it is your sin if you live another without it.” Oh, never bring this burden upon your mind, that you may not be able to have near communion with God by neglecting any known duty! It becomes a positive sin to any man if he lives in the neglect of that which he knows to be his bounden duty. I did hope I should have been able to have brought my own father here to-night. God has been pouring out his Spirit upon his labors, in answer to earnest prayer. Some little time ago, when the people were all busy with the harvest, there were only three present at one of the prayer-meetings, but the old gentleman was so led by the Spirit to believe in a revival of religion, and that God would pour out his Spirit upon them, that he was full of joy in looking for the blessing. Nor has he been disappointed, for at a late prayer-meeting, when there were some three hundred people present, he so overcome with joy that they were obliged to take him home to bed. He wrote to me somewhat to this effect: “My dear boy, do not press me to go. I believe it would so affect me that it be too much for me. I should be so overwhelmed with the love and faithfulness of our God, and I had rather die at home.” Oh, dear friends, go away from this meeting, not to doubt God, but to love and serve and praise him for all that he has done. You will not expect me to make a

long speech, and my feelings will not allow me to do so, but I would desire to bless God for all that he has done for us.

The Rev. JAMES SMITH then addressed the meeting. He said he heard the chairman say the last time he saw him, that he thought his son had made a mistake in coming to London, but from the very first time he (Mr. Smith), had heard Mr. Spurgeon, he always thought he had done perfectly right. He well remembered that when he had decided on leaving London, several friends came and expostulated with him, and told him how very wrong it was for him to leave Park Street; and a minister in the city asked him what he thought would become of it when he had left. His answer was, that if God wanted a man for Park Street, he knew where to find one and if he had not prepared him, he could prepare him in a short time. He now felt confirmed in that opinion, for if he had not left Park Street, humanly speaking, they would never have had that Tabernacle, they would not have had the Church they now possessed, nor would they have seen the wonder wrought in the land which they had witnessed. God seemed to be setting forth most important subjects for his Church to contemplate. If they went to Bristol, God had been teaching them there that faith in, and prayer to a God of Providence, were all but omnipotent and in connection with themselves, they had seen that the old-fashioned gospel still retained all its power. Some of them had been told years ago that they must keep pace with the times, that their doctrines were growing obsolete and that something new was required, but the old doctrines had been preached among them, and had proved to be the power of God to the salvation of multitudes. No one could now say that the truths of the gospel had lost their power. What the Church vented was not something new, but more of the power and operation of the Holy Ghost. In that Church, those doctrines had always been preached; though not always with the same

fullness, with the same vivacity, or the same success. Before the immortal Gill formed the Church by a division from the one afterwards assembling in Unicorn Yard, the same doctrines had been preached by Keach and others in the midst of opposition and persecution; and when Gill laid down his mantle, Rippon took it up, and preached the same gospel with as much, if not more power; and after he had labored long; he found time to assist him in the same glorious work, before he quite retired from the field, and shall another brother come forward till the Lord found him other work. When he (Mr. Smith) was invited to become the pastor, the Lord also enabled him in simplicity, not in the words of man's wisdom but in the words of Scripture, in the language of the heart rather than the language of the head, — to preach the same doctrines in connection with their influence upon the heart and their effects in the life, and though the measure of success awarded him was not to be compared to what had been awarded to their present beloved pastor, yet there were hundreds brought in through his instrumentality, and since that time he had met with many persons in various parts of the country, who acknowledged that though they never joined the Church, they were, through the power of the Word, brought into union with Christ, and had been living in fellowship with him. For his own part, he had no doubt that as long as his brother lived he would continue to preach the same great, grand, and glorious truths, and he hoped with tenfold more power and success. Glorious as it was to see one such a building as that in which they were then assembled, he should be glad to see ten such before he departed this life, and then to have the news brought up to heaven after he had arrived there, that Christ was exalted in every one of them, that the power of the Spirit was displayed, and the glorious, efficacy of atoning blood realised and experienced. At present he could but exclaim "What hath God wrought! "He remembered coming

to London on one occasion, after New Park Street Chapel was thronged, and a member of the Church, not very comfortably seated on account of the crowd that surrounded him, speaking to him of the wonderful success that was given, and the glorious work that was being wrought, said, "Ah! Sir, your prayers are answered.

Did you not use to pray Sunday after Sunday that God would crowd the place? Have I not heard you say, 'Lord cram the place?' And he has done it, and I think now you ought to be satisfied; however uncomfortable it may be for us, you ought to be very comfortable to think that God has answered your prayers." If his prayers had been connected with what God had done for them, he could only be thankful and tell them to take encouragement and believe more firmly the promise of God. Let them besiege the throne of grace, and determine in the strength that God had given them that they would have no rest till the salvation of Zion should go forth as brightness. Let them make the present a stepping-stone to the future; let them unfurl the blood-stained banner of the cross everywhere, and let each one of them preach the gospel of Christ by tongue, and pen, and especially by their life and conduct. The chairman had said he could not see his way into the water. His (Mr. Smith's) sight was not so good as formerly, but though he had not his spectacles, he could see to the very bottom of it. After his conversion, the first thing he saw was, that it was his duty to profess Christ in baptism. He was brought up in the Episcopal Church; he had never heard a sermon on baptism, and had never witnessed the administration of the ordinance; but by the simple reading of God's Word, it appeared to him as clear as the sun shining at noon, or the letters of the Roman alphabet, and he wondered that other people could not see it. He really was tempted once to say that they could not see it because they would not, but he had given that up now. Very many honest,

enlightened, and godly men had assured him they could not see it, and all he could do was to say that as light must come before duty, let them pray for light, and then follow it. He had been very much struck lately, just before administering the ordinance of baptism, by reading the eighth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. He thought that if a man who had never seen baptism administered in any form, should simply read that narrative and then go to some Episcopal place of worship and see the surpliced priest stand by the font, open a book, and after reading a certain form, take into his arms a beautiful babe, dressed and decorated for the occasion, sprinkle a little water on its face, and then mark the sign of the cross on its brow, and the man should ask what they were doing, and on being told they were baptizing the child, he would reply that he had been reading but yesterday in a very old book an account of a baptism which took place nearly two thousand years ago, but that it was totally different from what he had just seen. But supposing the same man went into a chapel in some respects like the Metropolitan Tabernacle and should see the minister of Christ standing with brethren and sisters by his side, and after reading God's Word, and stating what he believed to be taught there, and then after solemn prayer and praise, taking a brother or sister by the hand, went down into the water and immersed the candidate, the man would say at once that this corresponded exactly to the case he had been reading of, while the other certainly did not. He only wished other people saw this as clearly, and enjoyed it as much as he did, for he had seldom attended to the ordinance without enjoying his Master's presence, and the witness of the Spirit as to the importance and scriptural character of the ordinance. In conclusion, he hoped that as long as the marble of that baptistry lasted, or at least until Christ should come the second time, the baptistry may be in constant requisition, and that hundreds and thousands

converted by the Spirit's power and conformed to the image of God's Son may there publicly profess their faith in Christ. They had erected the house for God, and he hoped God would be greatly glorified there; they had erected it for Christ, and he hoped Christ would be highly exalted there; and that much good would be done both to saints and sinners whenever Christ was lifted up before them.

Mr. SPURGEON said that when they wanted to get the steam up, cold water was a very useful thing; but unless they also had some fire, they could not expect to get steam. He did not intend lighting the fire, but only bringing some coals, which he trusted some of the after-speakers would kindle into a blaze. He thought by speaking for a short time, he could perhaps suggest some topics to the speakers, first of all, they had some *peculiarities* which he supposed were not to be found in any other Church, at least in England. The first of these was, that for some time they had maintained *the eldership* in their midst. He supposed no one would deny that elders were continually spoken of in the Acts of the Apostles. They were told in Baptist and Independent Churches that the deacons were elders as well, but he wished to know by what law the two offices had been amalgamated. He could only say that it would have been utterly impossible for that Church to have existed, except as a mere shall and huge presence, if it had not been for the Scriptural and most expedient office of the eldership. He blessed God for his deacons, and they worked very hard; but when they had both the temporal and spiritual conduct of the Church's work, it was too much for them, and he saw at once, that if the elders took the spiritual, and the deacons the temporal conduct of affairs, the work would be much more efficiently performed. He believed his elders had uniformly commanded the respect, the esteem, and the love of the Church, and he personally felt extremely grateful to them for what they had done. He only

wished other Baptist Churches would follow their example in this matter, and he was sure that both the Churches and the minister would find the good effects of such a course. His officers and Church had made him the happiest man on earth, and when he had any cares or trouble, it was very seldom they came from the Church. Another of their peculiarities was, that they were Baptists holding open communion, and yet having none but persons who had been baptized in the membership of the Church. He was prepared to maintain this position against the attacks both of the Strict Communionist and the Open Membership man, both of whose principles he believed to be unscriptural. He would rather give up his pastorate than admit any man to the Church who was not obedient to his Lord's command; and such a course would certainly promote the downfall of any Church that practiced it. The mixed Baptist Churches were eating out the very vitals of the denomination; and though they were its strength in numbers, he believed them to be its real weakness. But however strict we were in discipline, communion was a thing over which they had no control. Every man who became a member of a recognized Church of Christ had a perfect right to Christian ordinances, he had a right to baptism and the Lord's "upper, and the fact of a man's being unbaptized, was no reason why he should not have extended to him the fullest Christian fellowship. He wished the Baptist Churches both of England and America would soon give up their open membership and hold the same position in this respect which his Church occupied — Strict discipline, unlimited fellowship with all the Church of God. Another peculiarity was that they had a perfect uniformity of Scriptural doctrine. When his brother, a pastor of a Church at Southampton, had taught a class of young persons the doctrines of grace, and introduced the old *Baptist Confession of Faith*, he raised a clamor in the Church which had made him an

unhappy man, but which had rendered him even more faithful to God and to the Church. The Southampton Church had no doctrines — no creed; they claimed the glorious liberty of believing anything they liked. He (Mr. Spurgeon) denied that there could be a Church without doctrines, and he denied their right even on their own unprincipled principles, to restrain their pastor from teaching whatever he believed. Those who did not insist upon Christ's truth were not a Church at all, but a mixed multitude of Israel and Egypt, ready to rebel at all times. Churches would get on very well without creeds so long as they were dead, but when they were alive and had the energy of the Spirit among them, they would find that creedless men were like dead limbs and would have to be cut off. He believed it would be difficult to confute the youngest member of their Church on any of the five points. They all loved the old doctrines of grace. It was sometimes said of him that he had preached an Arminian sermon; but he could say that he always preached what he believed true. Whenever he got a text, he tried not to make it Calvinistic, but to make it say what it really did say, whether that should be called Calvinism, Arminianism, Fullerism, Mongrelism, or whatever people liked to call it — it was his Master's Word and not his, and his Master would one day explain whatever did not seem to harmonize now. There were two or three things which had made that Church strong. One of these was its prayerfulness. A morning prayer-meeting had been established some four or five years ago as the result of a sermon which he preached, and it was still continued, and he hoped it would never be given up. His success had been due under God to the prayers of his Church. No mere *preaching* could do what had been done, but it was the prayer which had done it.

Another part of their strength was their young converts. The old members were the backbone of the Church, and the

young members were its hands, and what a Church wanted was an influx of young blood. He could narrate some most striking instances of some who had been converted during the last three or four years which would astonish those who heard them. Now- a-days it was the fashion to put the least thing that occurred in connection with a Church into the newspapers, but this had never been done by them, or it any had done it they had done it on their own responsibility, That Church was always left to speak for itself by what it did in the Savior's cause. As a Church too, they were all very united. It had been said that Baptist church-meetings were a sort of ecclesiastical bear-garden; that, however, was not the case there, for they always had the most delightful Church-meetings. As a Church they had their dangers, and one of them was that they might grow proud and be lifted up. There were a great many people who professed to be very anxious about him on this point. A very stately gentleman or a lady dressed in the very height of fashion, would sometimes tell him that they made it a matter of daily prayer that he might be kept humble. Now there was great danger of all of us becoming lifted up, but such remarks as these, from conceited individuals, would not cure the evil. To God's grace we look, and there alone.

Mr. W. OLNEY, on behalf of the deacons, then addressed the meeting. He said they all felt they had experienced the amazing goodness of God in such a manner in the erection of that building, that as a Church they were utterly unable to express the obligations they were under. From the very commencement God had been with them, and he felt they all ought to admit that their God had given them the place. It was not the house they had built for God, but the house God had built for them. God had given them the ground on which the building stood. He had given them wisdom in the choice of the design. He had permitted them to labor heartily and

unanimously in the work, and he had opened the hearts of his people generally throughout the land to help them in raising the necessary funds. They had also to acknowledge the goodness of God in sparing to them the life of their beloved pastor, who had been engaged in very arduous and incessant labor for the last seven years, and yet was among them then in every respect a better and happier man for all his labor in the Master's cause. They had other causes of thanksgiving, such as — that they themselves individually were permitted to see the completion of the work that they had with them on the present occasion their former pastors — and that the opening services had been so successful. But great as were the blessings they had received, they were warranted in expecting still more.

Their God who had been with them in temporals would be with them in spirituals. They had a great work before them as a Church and congregation, and God would prosper and bless them in doing it. It was of importance to remember that as God had highly blessed them, that so they should recognize his goodness by renewed consecration and devotedness to his cause. They had one special mission for God as a Church, which was, to pray for their pastor — to sympathise with him — to strive earnestly to hold up his hands and encourage his heart. They would also find every one of them some post to occupy. Let it be the endeavor of all to support the institutions which were about to be established and particularly to encourage strangers (who would come to hear in large numbers) to cast in their lot with the people of God. Above all, let that solemn text be remembered by every one of them, “Unto whomsoever much is given of him shall be much required.” However much some other persons might not like the name Tabernacle that had been given to the building to them it was singularly appropriate. It was in that Tabernacle they would offer continual sacrifice. Here they would seek guidance in all

spiritual matters — here they would enjoy mutual fellowship and union.

The place would be for a memorial of God's goodness to their children — here they would find exercise for joy, and faith and love — here would they realize the special presence of their Father and God — and here would they seek continual preparation for higher and nobler service, until having done with Tabernacle worship, they would be transferred to the temple above *to see Him*, "Whom having not seen, we love in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

The REV. DR. ANGUS said he was sure they must all feel with him that it was a most delightful thing to be present on that occasion. He could not tell them how much he sympathized with the chairman when he spoke of how God had blessed his Son. He could hardly imagine the feelings of a father who had a son in the Christian ministry and especially the feelings of one who had two sons both serving the same Master, in the same noble and devoted spirit. Mr. Spurgeon had told them they were overdone with advice, but as Mr. Olney had set the example of running counter to the pastor, he for once should side with the deacon. He had heard of the Tabernacle before, but had not seen it, and he could only say the half had not been told him. A finer, nobler, and in some respects, more awful sight than that place when filled with people, he could scarcely imagine. He would remind them that as they had a model place, and in most respects, if not in all, a model pastor, they should also be a model Church: for this purpose they needed to be humble, though perhaps, they had less danger of becoming proud than if they had had fewer gifts; for the proudest men were generally those who had the least to be proud of, and the humblest man was generally the one who had great gifts and recognized the greatness of them He did not

say they were more likely to be proud there than in their old place, but that they wanted a measure of humility in proportion to their new privileges. In addition to this, they should combine with the strongest maintenance of their old doctrines, a large-hearted and Catholic spirit. They could afford them both and should combine them.

Such was the soundness of their creed, and the Scripturalness of their doctrines. They held firmly the views of John Calvin, they held the spirituality of the Christian church, and saw clearly into the meaning of the ordinances; let them hold all these views still, but yet be always ready to give their hand and heart to all who loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and in truth. In proportion as Churches combined these two things, and sacrificed neither of them to the other, they would be mighty in God's work, and in extending his kingdom. They needed also to combine spirituality with a wise machinery; the latter to meet the acquirements of such a Church, the former to give life and power to the whole. But especially he would urge them to continue to love their pastor, to pray for him, and work with him. Let them always remember that he was what the grace of God had made him, and if in the providence of God, he should be taken from them — whether at a sooner or a later period — let them still trust in the same God! He believed Mr. Spurgeon was doing a work which all his predecessors from Dr. Gill downwards, had not been permitted to do; at all events, God had blessed him more than he had blessed them all.

For his own part, he could only be thankful that God had made him so useful as he had, and he prayed that God would continue to bless both him and his people more and more.

The REV. C. ROOM then addressed the meeting, and gave some interesting particulars relating to the time when he was engaged as co-pastor with Dr. Rippon.

Mr. SPURGEON then said, that he had now in the name of the Church to present a testimonial to their senior deacon, Mr. James Low, as an acknowledgment of the judicious and valuable services he had rendered to the Church for more than fifty years as a member and twenty-five years as a deacon. Mr. Spurgeon said he could most cordially agree with all that was expressed in the testimonial, and was right happy to assure his friend of his hearty appreciation of his prudent advice and admirable counsels.

Whenever he (Mr. Spurgeon) conceived a new scheme, Mr. Low was always the longest in seeing it; but when he did see it, he was one of the most fervent and earnest in carrying it out. He thought it was always a good thing to have a few conservatives in connection with anybody, in order to prevent the coach from going down the hill too fast. He was himself a very great conservative in Church matters, and he liked to have associated with him such a man as Mr. Low, so that when some of the younger people, such as the deacons behind him, were going too fast, Mr. Low and himself could put the skid on. It was a great mercy that God had spared their friend's life so long, and he earnestly hoped that they should long have him in their midst. The testimonial, which consisted of an illuminated sheet of parchment, enclosed in a handsome and massive frame was then presented to Mr. Low. We here present a copy to our readers.

The Baptized Church of Jesus Christ, under the pastoral care of the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon

At the Annual Church of Jesus Christ, held on Wednesday, January 16th, 1861, the following Resolution was proposed, seconded, and carried unanimously: —

“That we desire to record our devout gratitude to our Heavenly Father for his continuing to us as a Church the eminently judicious and valuable services of our esteemed and

beloved senior deacon, JAMES LOW, who has been a member of this Church for a period of 50 years, and a deacon for 25 years.

We desire also to express to our beloved brother our hearty congratulations that God has so long spared his valuable and useful life and granted him grace to serve the Church of Christ so faithfully and so well.

May that Master whom he has so long served graciously continue to our brother his special and comforting presence, and give him in his future life much nearness of communion with him, and at a distant period an abundant entrance into his kingdom and glory.”

Signed on behalf of the Church, by the Pastor, Deacons, and Elders.

Mr. Low, in coming forward to return thanks, was received with loud cheers. He said that they would easily conceive that the kind expressions of their beloved pastor, supported as they had been by their kind response, were enough to overwhelm any man, particularly such an old man as he was. If he looked back at the fifty years during which he had been in connection with that Church, he had great cause for gratitude and humility, especially that he had been spared to see the Church through so many phases, and to what it had risen under their dearly-beloved pastor. It fell to his lot first to invite Mr. Spurgeon to supply their pulpit and he remembered that Mr. Spurgeon readily answered that invitation, expressing his surprise that he should be asked to supply a metropolitan pulpit, and that although he had been for some little time the minister of the Church where he was laboring, he was only nineteen years of age. Young as he was, he (Mr. Low) renewed his application, and they all had had an opportunity of seeing the results. God had blessed him in a marvelous manner, and it rejoiced his (the speaker's) heart to see the Church in its present prosperous

condition, and although his work was nearly done, it was a great consolation to him to have listened to the delightful and practical speech which had been made that evening by Mr. William Olney. Instead of the fathers the children were rising up. With reference to the testimonial they had so kindly presented him, he had not the remotest idea that anything of the kind was going to be done. He highly appreciated it, and could assure them that he should hand it down to his family, and it would be carefully preserved by them. It had fallen to his lot to receive many testimonials from public bodies, but none had given him so much pleasure as that one. He was especially pleased to find that the testimonial had not been paid for out of the funds of the Church, but by the voluntary contributions of the members. In conclusion, he begged to return his sincere thanks for the great kindness they had shown towards him.

Mr. SPURGEON said, he also had the pleasure of presenting a similar testimonial to their much-loved friend Mr. Thomas Olney, who had been connected with the Church for fifty-one years as a member, and twenty- two years as a deacon. Mr. Olney had been of great use to the Church in many ways during the long time he had been connected with it, and had rendered it most important service as its treasurer. Mr. Olney was a father to the minister, and a sleepless guardian of the Church. Such a deacon few Churches possessed, and a better was never chosen. He joyed in their joy, and sorrowed in their sorrow. Abuse fell to the pastor's lot sometimes, but his kind deacons and elders always had a cheering word. He had been told they were singing songs about him (Mr. Spurgeon) in the street. He was sure that if any poor man could get a halfpenny by abusing him, he hoped he would carry on his trade.

The following is a copy of the testimonial:

The Baptized Church of Jesus Christ, under the pastoral care of the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon.

At the Annual Church Meeting, held on Wednesday, January 16th, 1861, the following Resolution was proposed, seconded, and carried unanimously: —

“That this Church desires to record its devout gratitude to Almighty God, for that abundant grace which has preserved our dear and honored brother THOMAS OLNEY, as a consistent, useful, and beloved member of this Church for the lengthened period of 51 years

And while to the grace of God all the varied excellencies of our brother are to be ascribed the pastor, officers, and Church members cannot refrain from returning unfeigned and hearty thanks to our brother, for his Indefatigable labors as deacon for 22 years and for his most valuable services as treasurer.

No man can be more truly worthy of the esteem of his Christian brethren, and we most earnestly invoke a blessing upon him, upon our beloved sister the partner of his life and upon his godly family, which is by so many ties united with his as a people.

We trust that in that great House of Prayer, over every stone of which he has watched so anxiously he may be spared to see the largest wishes of his heart fulfilled in the gathering of immense assemblies, the salvation of many souls and the daily increase of our members as a Church.”

Signed on behalf of the Church, by the Pastor, Deacons, and Elders. Mr. THOMAS OLNEY then rose, but was unable to speak for some little time on account of the enthusiastic manner in which he was received. He returned his most hearty thanks to them for the kindness they had shown towards him,

and said he felt extremely grateful if God had suffered him in any measure to be of any service whatever in connection with the Church.

Mr. SPURGEON then proposed a vote of thanks to his father for presiding, which was carried with acclamation.

The CHAIRMAN begged to return his thanks for the kindness which had been manifested towards him and the honor conferred upon him. He had been exceedingly interested in the meeting, and he hoped its result would be an increased feeling of fellowship between them all. He was able to announce that he believed his son would soon have to baptize his mother in the baptistry before him. He could but express his gratitude to God for the favors which had been shown both to him and to them, and he earnestly prayed that God would still extend his mercy towards them.

The Benediction having been pronounced, the proceedings terminated.

On Wednesday evening, a large number of believers of all denominations assembled to celebrate the Lord's Supper.

Dr. Steane, Dr. Hamilton, and Mr. Spurgeon presided at the tables. The deacons and elders of the neighboring Churches served the communicants, and Revelation J. Lafleur of Canada, and Revelation J. Hitchens prayed.

Solemnity of feeling and union of heart were manifest throughout the house, and the addresses were full of the sweet spirit of love and grace. Such a season we have hardly ever enjoyed before.

Dr. STEANE remarked, that in the largest of Nonconforming sanctuaries they met, as the largest number of believers, who had ever communed together at one time since the days of their glorified Lord.

The offering, amounting to nearly one hundred pounds, was presented to the widow of the late Rev. J. George.

381 CHRISTIAN BAPTISM – COL. 2:12

A Sermon
Delivered on Tuesday Evening, April 9th, 1861,
by the
REV. HUGH STOWELL BROWN
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God who hath raised him from the dead.” — Colossians 2:12

IT IS THE FIRM BELIEF of almost all Christian people that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, before he left the earth, instituted two ordinances, namely, Baptism and the Lord's Supper — ordinances which were to be observed by his disciples throughout every age on to the end of the world. Perhaps, indeed, I ought to say that all Christian people without any exception whatever, acknowledge the appointment to which I have just referred; because the Society of Friends, although it rejects the outward and visible signs, nevertheless believes in those great principles which those signs are intended to symbolize, viz., the baptism of the Holy Ghost and the communion of the soul with Christ. By almost all Christians in every age of the world, the observance of the outward sign as well as the recognition of the inward grace has been regarded as part of the will of the Lord Jesus Christ. On this occasion, we have to do only with the ordinance of baptism, and to this I wish to draw your candid and careful attention. The ground upon which this ordinance is founded is the command of our Savior addressed to his disciples just before he ascended to

heaven when he said, “Go ye, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Now if this be a command of Christ, (and I am not aware that the genuineness of the passage in which it appears has ever been called in question,) then, of course, it is the duty of all Christian people according to their convictions as to the nature and meaning of this command to observe and to maintain it on to the end of time. I think it may also be asserted that with the exception of the Society of Friends, all Christians regard the ordinance of baptism as one in which water is to be employed in some way or other, and very rightly so, because if baptism be altogether inward and spiritual — the baptism of the Holy Ghost — then we must believe that the baptism of the Holy Ghost is a baptism which one man can administer to another. The very fact that the baptism mentioned in the Scripture is a baptism which one man can administer to another, is sufficient to prove that in this baptism there is some outward, visible, material rite, ceremony, or ordinance which Christian people are to observe. Thus far, with the exception of the Society of Friends, I believe we are all agreed that the ordinance of baptism does imply the use and application of water in some way or other. So far we all, or nearly all, travel together, but at this point, the body of Christians to which we belong feel compelled to pursue a different course from that which is adopted by their brethren. The very name we bear, indicates that there is something or other in connection with the ordinance of baptism in which we do not agree with the great majority of Christian people. And for the information of such as may not be thoroughly well informed upon this point, (and I by no means cast the slightest slur or rejection on any man's intelligence if I suppose him to be a little uninformed upon this point, for very extensive ignorance with regard to it prevails) I shall in a very few words try to explain the difference or

differences which exist; between us and other Christians upon this matter. The majority of Christian people believe that so far as the outward rite is concerned, the conditions of the ordinance are fulfilled when water, in however small a quantity, is poured or sprinkled upon the candidate; we, on the other hand, believe that the outward conditions of the ordinance are not fulfilled unless the candidate be wholly immersed in water. Again, (and this is by far the most important point of difference,) the very great majority of Christian people think infant children fit and proper subjects for this ordinance; we, on the other hand, believe that none are fit and proper subjects for the ordinance of baptism, excepting such as really believe and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior and their King. You will perceive that the difference resolves itself into two questions — a question with regard to the mode of this ordinance, and a question with reference to the subjects. These two questions, “How ought baptism to be administered?” and, “to whom ought baptism to be administered?” — these are the questions to which we in our consciences feel compelled to offer answers which differ very materially from those which are given by other Christian people. Again let me explain this matter and set in as plain terms as possible. We believe that this ordinance should never be administered apart from the entire immersion of the candidate in water, and we also believe that none should be candidates for this ordinance excepting those who avow their faith in Christ. And here let me observe that the very common notion that we were in the habit of practicing adult baptism is utterly a mistake. We do not contend for the baptism of adults; we contend for the baptism of believers. Show us a child however young, who believes in Christ, and we gladly accept him; but if a man as old as Methuselah were to come to us in unbelief, we should say to him, “Sir, your age

certainly entitles you to our respect, but it gives you no manner of claim to baptism as ordained by Jesus Christ.”

But now, perhaps, someone will exclaim, perhaps in scorn, perhaps in great surprise, “Who are you, that you presume to differ from the general verdict of the Christian world? Who are you, that you so pertinaciously maintain these crotchety notions of yours, when all the world is against you, and when there is not only the decision of the Church of Rome, against which we should ourselves rebel, but the voice of the Church of England, the voice of the Church of Scotland the voice of the Lutheran Church, the Presbyterians, the Methodists and the Congregationalists, all against you, and the most able divines of the Christian world all testifying that you are in error? Who are you, that you should thus set up your opinions against everybody else? Call a solemn assembly; canvass the Christian world, and certainly for one hand held up in favor of your opinions there will be a thousand held up to their decided and utter condemnation.”

Well, we do not choose to put it to the vote in this way. We have not such entire faith in the infallibility of majorities as to submit our religious convictions to any such tribunal. If the Copernican system of astronomy had been put to the vote two hundred and fifty years ago, it would have had a smaller minority than our views would have if put to the vote now. If the doctrine of justification by faith had been put to the vote four hundred years ago, the “Noes” would have had it. If the truth of Christianity were now submitted to the vote of the entire world, there would be somewhere about five hundred millions against it. And further, let the voters be all Christian people, let the suffrage be confined to those who really believe in Christ, and then if you as a Church of England man, or you as a Methodist, or you as a Congregationalist, or you as a Presbyterian, submit your views of Church-government, and

some other things, depend upon it you would as certainly be defeated as we should be if we submitted baptism to the decision of such a council as that. I hope that no one is so silly as to suppose that we are necessarily in error because we are in the minority; for let this be borne in mind, especially by the worshipper of majorities, that every great truth was at one time held by a very small minority, if indeed it be not held by a small minority now. Every great truth, whether in the province of religion, or in the domain of science, or in the region of politics, is at first and for a very long time held by small minorities; and in all the currency of proverbs, there is no more pernicious maxim than that “What everybody says must be true.”

But of course, you will ask our reasons for maintaining this opinion. I think we have just as good a right to ask your reasons for maintaining the opposite opinion. Galileo had just as good a right to ask his opponents why they believed the world did not move, as they to ask him why he believed it did. However you ask for our reasons, and I shall endeavor to give those reasons as clearly and as briefly as I can. We ought to have good reasons, because I can assure you it has never been much to our secular comfort and advantage that we hold those views. These views have never done us very much good, considered in a merely secular or worldly sense. We are not bound to them by any golden chain. They have not been made plain and clear and attractive to us by rich benefices and comfortable livings. Our opinions are not endowed with prelacies and prebendal stalls, with manses, and glebes, and royal bounties. Thank God, whatever people may choose to say of us, they cannot say we are Baptists for the love of filthy lucre.

One thing is certain, that “the root of all evil” is not likely to draw much nourishment from the soil of Baptist ministerial stipends. We must of course state our reasons, and I say they ought to be somewhat substantial reasons. Well, then, we go

on this principle mark you, that the only appeal is to the Word of God. This is a principle in which every holiest and sound-hearted Protestant must agree with us; it is his principle as much as ours, and it is the only principle that will save him from all the errors and superstitions of Romanism. So that, taking the matter into the court of God's Word only, it signifies very little to us what may have been said by such-and-such a council, or such-and-such a Church, or such-and-such a reverend father: it greatly simplifies the matter when it's understood that we intend to submit this question to the Word of God, and to the Word of God only. And I say to every Protestant here, that he must accept the principle and act upon it. If he begin to refer to fathers, and churches, and councils, well then let him take care, he may rely upon it that on such a principle he will not be able to stand for one moment. If he thinks with such weapons to vanquish us, let him rest assured that he will very soon be vanquished himself by the same. It may be that the charge from such ordnance shall destroy us, but depend upon it the recoil will destroy the man who has the temerity to fire it. This principle then will be agreed in by every Protestant, excepting those who in these days are beginning to protest Scripture itself, but every sound-hearted, honest-minded Protestant, will go with us in saying that the Word of God is the only tribunal to which we can go. This being the case, let us see how the matter stands.

It is alleged by us, then, that in the ordinance of baptism the candidate should be wholly immersed in water. And now, if we were disposed, and if we recognised any other authority than Scripture, we might refer to the law of the Church of England, which is most distinctly to the effect, that excepting in cases of certified weakness, immersion shall be the mode of administering this ordinance, and the Church of England man, at all events, has nothing to say against the adoption of this

practice; it is his practice as much as ours; it is his law as much as ours. His prayer-book tells him we are right; the large fonts, three feet in diameter, which he sees in so many parish churches, tell him we are right; and he knows that in this respect we are the only faithful Church of England people in this land. We might also refer to the testimony of the ancient Church, and the practice of the olden time, with regard to which it may be said with perfect certainty that in the first ages immersion was the commonly-accepted mode. But of course we appeal to the Scriptures, and appealing to the Scriptures, we find that baptism is, as our text informs us, a burial and resurrection with Christ, that it is a sign and symbol of the believer's participation in Christ's burial and resurrection, and this I think as plainly as possible shows us what the mode was in ancient times. This, indeed, is generally admitted by divines who still maintain that this mode is not binding upon Christians at the present time; but surely, if baptism is to be a representation of burial and resurrection there must be something in the ordinance itself which shall be suggestive of such a truth. And then again, we appeal to the meaning of the word; this word baptism has not been translated in our Scriptures excepting in one or two instances, in which it appears in the form of the word "wash" or "washing," and in these cases the idea of immersion if not absolutely required, is at all events perfectly admissible, and involves no incongruity, and if you search the Scriptures through you will not find a single passage in which this word, whether it be employed literally or figuratively, does not suggest, or may not suggest, the idea of immersion. When we consider that Philip and the eunuch "went down both of them into the water;" that our Savior "went up straightway out of the water" after John had baptized him; that John "was baptizing near Salim because there was much water there," I think it is very evident that something more than aspersion, or pouring of

water, must be implied. And if we consult trustworthy authorities for the meaning of this word we shall find that in all cases it either may or must imply the idea of immersion. I lately read a very valuable paper by a most scholarly divine, who tells us that he has thoroughly investigated every instance in which the word can be found whether in the fathers or in the classics. He gives us upwards of two hundred cases, in the great majority of which the word must mean immersion, and in every one of which it may have, and probably really has, that signification. Indeed, almost all scholarly men are agreed that this is the meaning of the word, and not only so, but also that this was the mode that was adopted in the apostolic age. These things are not disputed, or are scarcely disputed. Men do ask why should you adhere to this mode? and that is a question we shall have to consider presently; but they scarcely dispute anywhere that this mode was ordained by Christ, and practiced in the apostolic age; and therefore, if you ask “Why do you immerse in baptism?” I say because baptism must, in the very nature of things, be a representation setting forth figuratively the burial and resurrection of Christ, and because to immerse, and to immerse only, is the meaning of this word baptize.

But again, our more important difference with our Christian brethren is that we decline to accept as candidates for the ordinance all but those who avow their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now here, although the practice of Christendom is very much against us, I think that even in that practice there are some points that tell very strongly in our favor. For example, baptism is called a sacrament. This word is scarcely recognised amongst us I believe, but still let us examine it. Baptism is regarded as a sacrament.

What is a sacrament? I suppose it is an oath. Now would you administer an oath to an infant child? Is there common sense in such a procedure as that? You would provoke laughter

if you were to take your infant child before a Justice of the Peace and there administer to it an oath to the effect that he should to the end of his days be a faithful subject and servant of the queen, and is there anything more rational than this, when you take an infant child to a minister of God's word, that to that child an oath may be administered by which it shall swear fealty to the Captain of our Salvation? But you say it is not to the infant that the oath is administered at all; it is to the sponsors. Well then, I want to know to whom the sacrament is administered. The oath is administered to the sponsors. The baptism is then administered to the sponsors, for the baptism and the oath are one. But it would seem as though the ordinance were divided. The water is administered to the child, and the oath is administered to the sponsors.

There is something rather like confusion here. If baptism be a sacrament and a sacrament an oath, then in administering baptism to a child, you are administering an oath to a child. But surely every oath ought to be administered to such, and such only as understand the nature of an oath, and also give a solemn assent to the propositions that are embodied in it. And thus, if the word sacrament is to be applied to baptism at all, I accept it then, and I submit that it protests, and protests most strongly, against the administration of this ordinance to any except to those who understand and assent to the principles which are connected with it. Although our appeal is to Scripture, our Poedo-Baptist friends must really not suppose that the testimony of the church is all in their favor, for certainly for two or three centuries if not more, the baptism of infant children was not the general practice of the Christian church. It was opposed by Tertullian at the latter end of the second century or the beginning of the third; and at a far later date than this, we find baptism administered to persons of mature years. I do not wish to press into our service such cases as that of

Constantine, who was baptized late in life. He was born a heathen, and he appears to have continued practically a heathen of the very worst stamp to the last.

The mistake in his case was, not that he was baptized so late, but that he was baptized at all. As he was baptized during his last illness, his baptism I presume was clinical, and therefore administered by aspersion, and those who are in favor of this mode are perfectly welcome to this sprinkled Pagan; I am very glad that the ordinance in its Scriptural form was never disgraced by having Constantine for a subject. But we find that several of the most eminent and pious fathers of the Church were not baptized until they had arrived at maturity and were thoroughly Christian men. In the fourth century flourished Gregory of Nazianzum, Ambrose of Milan, Jerome, Chrysostom, and Augustine; these eminent men, who were afterwards such great theologians, were all them the sons of Christian parents, at least of Christian mothers, and yet not one of them was baptized until mature age, and until each of them had strong religious convictions; in fact, none of them were baptized until they were truly converted to Jesus Christ. The case of Gregory peculiarly in point. Gregory of Nanzianzum, was the son of a Christian bishop; his pious mother Nonna, dedicated him to God from his very birth and yet when as he baptized? When he was thirty years old! The instance of Augustine is perhaps, still more remarkable. Augustine was the object of his pious mother's deepest solicitude, his conversion was the thing nearest and dearest to her heart, and yet she did not have him baptized. When he was a grown up lad, he was attacked with a very dangerous illness, and expressed a strong desire for baptism and yet the ordinance was deferred, and the great Augustine was not baptized until he was a man thirty-two years old and was fully imbued with the knowledge and spirit of the gospel of Christ. Now mark you, I do not say that these

cases prove that there was no such thing as infant baptism in the fourth century, and it is for no such purpose I adduce them, but they do prove this, that Christian mothers such as Nonna and Monica, and Anthusa, Christian women of the very highest intelligence and piety, did not in that age deem it necessary that their infant children should be baptized, but left the matter to be one of personal profession when their children should have a faith to profess. But still we would appeal to the Scriptures, and when we come to consult God's Word, strange as it may appear, there is not one passage from the beginning to the end which indicates the baptism of any but professed believers in Christ. It is true that households were baptized, and it is said that there might have infant children in those households. It is a sufficient answer to this to say, that there might not have been any infants in those households. As to the Philippian jailer, we read that "he believed in God with all his house;" as to the house of Stephanas, we read "they had addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints:" and, as to Lydia, there is not the slightest evidence that she was either a wife or mother. And in fact, so far as historical narrative is concerned, there is not a single incident in Scripture that leads us to suppose that any but professed believers in Christ were baptized. It would have been very strange if such an incident had turned up anywhere, seeing that our Lord's commission runs in this order; *"Go ye, teach all nations, baptizing them; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."* And we read that Peter says, "Repent and be baptized every one of you;" and again, he says, "Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? "Does it not appear that he would have anticipated an objection and would have allowed an objection if there had been no evidence of conversion to God?

And Paul says, "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Is not this the work of an intelligent

and believing man? Or to come to our text, Paul says that we are “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also we are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.” The meaning of this passage seems to be this: — We are buried and risen with Christ through the faith of the operation of God, through faith in God’s operation, God’s work, energy, and power, as manifested in the resurrection of Christ from the dead; that is to say those persons evidently were baptized, buried, and raised with Christ through their faith in the fact that God’s energy or power had raised Jesus Christ from the dead; the fact of Christ’s resurrection is evidently attached to baptism here. And the apostle Peter says, “Baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ;” that is to say, those persons who have been baptized are persons who have the answer of a good conscience towards God through Christ’s resurrection; through faith in Christ’s resurrection they now have the consciousness of the forgiveness of sins; and so faith in the resurrection of Christ, is represented as an essential and indeed the chief element of Christian baptism.

These then, are some of our reasons for holding these views. If you ask why we immerse, we say, “Because this is the undisputed — or all but undisputed — sole meaning of the word, and because apart from immersion, there is no sign of burial and resurrection with Christ.” And if you ask, “Why do you baptize only those that believe?” We say, “Because we can discover no trace in God’s Word of the baptism of any other and we think, that as baptism is a profession of a man’s faith in Christ, this profession ought never to be made excepting by such as really are the subjects of the faith that is thus professed.” And now, if anything can be advanced to show that any other

but immersion is really the meaning of the word, and if any case can be got from the Scriptures, either directly or by implication, showing that any but believers were baptized, we give this matter up. We have no interest to subserve but the cause of truth.

Of course, many objections are urged against these views of ours, and to some of these objections, for we shall not have time to notice them all, I shall now briefly direct attention.

I have heard it said by some, and I dare say you have heard it too, that the administration of this ordinance by immersion is scarcely consistent with decency. With decency! There are some people in the world, who I suppose, would advocate the omission of the first chapter from the Epistle to the Romans; there are some people who must think it would be a very proper thing to blot the seventh commandment from the decalogue, for it is scarcely decent; and they ought to go in for an expurgated edition of the sermon on the Mount, and that I hope would satisfy them. My dear friends, Christ ordained, and his apostles practiced this ordinance of immersion; most certainly they did; there is no dispute about that. There is dispute whether the ordinance is obligatory in this form at the present day, but really there is no dispute that this was commanded and that this was done. Do you think that our Lord Jesus Christ would ever have sanctioned anything that bordered in the slightest degree on indecency? I have only one word to say to such objectors, and it is this, “To the pure all things are pure, but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure, but even their mind and conscience is defiled.”

But it is a strong point, or supposed to be a strong point, that on the day of Pentecost three thousand people were baptized, and how could they all be immersed. Well, why not? The only objections I can imagine are these, — a lack of water and a lack of time. But to suppose that there was a deficient

water-supply, — to suppose this from all that we know, and especially from all that we do not know about ancient Jerusalem, appears to me to be a great absurdity. And as to the want of time, — if the apostles alone had baptized these three thousand, there certainly would be something rather formidable in the objection; but it would seem that the apostles were not in the habit of baptizing many, and that they often gave this work to others; and on that occasion there might have been a hundred administrators of baptism, those who were first baptized might baptize others, and in this way the administration to the whole three thousand might very easily be accomplished before the sun went down upon the day of Pentecost.

“Ah! but,” say some, “there is a passage in the first epistle to the Corinthians that you cannot get over. It is said that the Israelites ‘were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.’ How can that be a case of immersion? “Well, I might ask you, how could it be a case of anything else? Undoubtedly it was a case of immersion. When you think of the cloud, you must not think of a small pillar of cloud suspended high above the people and always going before them. It is written in one of the Psalms,

“He spread his cloud for a covering.” And they passed under the cloud, the channel of the Red Sea, with the waters piled up on either hand, — this constituted the huge baptistry for the people, and the cloud was the element in which they were baptized; as plainly as possible it was a case of immersion in the cloud.

But again, there are many who say, “Well, after all what does it matter if a man has been baptized by the Spirit of God, and really is regenerated and born again, and has his sins washed away by the blood of Christ, the outward and visible sign is a thing of very little moment.” Well, if it be such a matter of indifference whether you adopt this or that mode, I should say

it would be as well to follow the Society of Friends and adopt neither one nor the other. But you do believe there is some external rite, well, then, surely the external rite should be that which does set forth figuratively the very truth intended by the ordinance. In the language of symbols forms are everything, forms give those symbols all their meaning, and therefore it is not altogether an unimportant matter that baptism, signifying burial and resurrection with Christ, should indicate this even in its very form and mode.

But there are also objections to our baptizing none but believers. Infants, it is said, should be baptized, not that there is any positive and direct proof of this in God's Word, still it may be inferred. For instance. "They brought infants to Jesus." What did they bring them for? That he might put his hand upon them and pray for them. Yet it is inferred by many that our Savior was in the habit of baptizing infants because they brought infants to him that he might touch them and bless them! The opposite inference is the one I should be prepared to draw, for if our Savior were in the habit of baptizing infants the disciples certainly would not have rebuked those that brought the infants to Jesus, because such an act would have been quite a matter of course. On this incident, Jeremy Taylor remarks, "To infer from such a passage as this that infants should be baptized only proves that there is a great want of better arguments." But again, it is said baptism came in the place of circumcision, and since infants were circumcised, infants ought to be baptized. Now it appears to me to be altogether a matter of assumption that baptism came in the place of circumcision. There is nothing in God's Word that states this. And let me particularly call attention to this fact; it is well known to every reader of the Acts and the Epistles that a great controversy arose in the early church with reference to this matter of circumcision; certain men went down to Antioch

and said to the Christians there, “Unless ye be circumcised ye cannot be saved;” the church at Jerusalem met to consider this matter, and they sent their decision. Now, if baptism is come in the place of circumcision, of course the way in which common sense would settle the question would be this, “No, you need not be circumcised, because you have been baptized, and baptism has come in the place of circumcision,” but in the decision which the church at Jerusalem sent to the church at Antioch there is not the slightest allusion to any such substitution. Then again, Paul was perpetually arguing against those who were insisting upon the importance of circumcision. — If baptism is substituted for that institution, Paul’s short and easy method of silencing every objector would have been this, “No, these people have been baptized, and that is the Christian circumcision;” but what does Paul say? We read what he says in the verse which precedes our text. He says, “In whom” — that is, in Christ — “In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.” Now observe, “In whom ye are circumcised with a circumcision made without hands in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.” The circumcision of Christ is the Christian circumcision, is that which has come in the place of the old circumcision, and this Christian circumcision is a circumcision, “made without hands.” Will any man in his senses say that this is baptism? Christian circumcision is something that is accomplished without human agency. Baptism is not an ordinance made or administered without hands. Moreover, he says, with reference to this matter, that we are circumcised “in the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh,” which is certainly the work of an intelligent, conscientious, believing, and God-fearing man. In one word, if you want to know what the Christian equivalent for

circumcision under the new dispensation is, it is conversion to God. It is this, and it is nothing else. If baptism has come in the place of circumcision, on what principle then did Paul circumcise Timothy? If this idea of the substitution of baptism for circumcision be correct, then ought not Paul to have said, “In Christ Jesus circumcision availeth nothing, neither uncircumcision, but baptism?” Ought he not to have said, “We are the circumcised; “we who have been baptized?” But what he does say is this, “In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but the keeping of the commandments of God,” and “We are the congregation who worship God in one Spirit and who rejoice in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh.” Evidently, then, those who have received the Christian circumcision are those who keep the commandments of God, who worship God in the Spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and these conditions are certainly applicable to none excepting those who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, I would say there seems to be no fairness in arguing from the one institution to the other. Only consider this fact, that in a controversy which this supposed idea of baptism having come in the place of circumcision would have settled in a moment, there is no allusion to such mode of settling the question, and I think that we are led to infer, with the most absolute certainty, that it is altogether a baseless assumption that circumcision is represented by baptism. No, in the Christian dispensation, if there be any equivalent, any succession to the circumcision of the old covenant, it is conversion to God — it is the circumcision of the heart, it is the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh. That is the Christian circumcision.

But it will be said by some, “You make a great deal too much of this ordinance of baptism.” Well, I am free to confess that there may be here and there a good brother who makes

rather too much of this ordinance. Yet this I certainly can say, from a somewhat extensive knowledge of our denomination, that in almost every case you will find that the ordinance of baptism is by held us in most thorough and lowly subordination to the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the work of atonement by his sacrifice and death, to the influence and the indwelling of the Divine Spirit, to the necessity of repentance and of faith, to the importance of a life of personal holiness, and to every other great principle of the holy faith which we profess. I do not think that we are fairly chargeable with making too much of this ordinance. When we say of this ordinance that it regenerates the soul, — when we say that herein persons are made “members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven,” — when we rush with all haste to baptize the sick and the dying, and when we refuse to accord to those who die unbaptized, the rites, the decencies, the charities of Christian burial, — then tell us, for indeed we shall deserve to be told, that we do most monstrously exaggerate the importance of this ordinance; but you shall go through the length and breadth of this realm, and you shall visit all the Baptist churches in the States of America and on the continent of Europe, and nowhere will you find such sentiments or such practices prevailing amongst the Baptist people. I trust we make no more of this ordinance, and no less than is made of it in God's Word. We do not baptize our own infant children, and this, I think, is evidence enough that we do not very grossly exaggerate the importance of this institution.

Still you say, “You do not regard it as essential to salvation, and therefore why do you make this the ground of separation from your brethren?” “My dear friend are you a Congregationalist? You do not believe that your Congregational polity is essential to salvation — why then do you not join the Episcopal communion? Are you a Methodist?

You do not think the Conference is to save your soul; why do you not return to the bosom of the Established Church? Are you a Free Church of Scotland man? You will admit that people can be saved in the old Church yet; then why did you make such a fuss about that Disruption business? I do not blame you for the Disruption, not by any means; perhaps you did what was perfectly right. A thing may not be essential, and yet it may be very far from unimportant. We cannot but regard infant baptism as the main root of the superstitious and destructive dogma of baptismal regeneration, to which as Protestants we are opposed; we cannot but regard infant baptism as the chief corner-stone of State Churchism, to which as Dissenters we are opposed; we cannot but regard infant baptism as unscriptural, and to everything that is unscriptural we, as disciples of Jesus Christ, must be opposed; and we do trust that all who differ from us, and however widely they may differ, will still admit that we are only doing what is right in maintaining what we believe to be the truth of God with reference to this matter. Hitherto it has been in obloquy, and scorn, and ridicule, and oftentimes in persecution that these principles have been held. Hitherto we have been a sect everywhere spoken against. Probably the first martyr burnt in England for religion, and certainly the last, was a Baptist; and others had trials of cruel mockings, and scourgings, yea moreover, and of bonds and imprisonments; and were destitute, afflicted, and tormented.” We cannot glory in our numbers, we cannot glory in our power, we cannot glory in our wealth; but we can glory in the faith and constancy by which those who went before us were enabled by divine grace to sustain the infliction of the most grievous wrongs — wrongs which were all the more keenly felt because received at the hands of fellow-Christians, fellow-Protestants, and even fellow-Puritans. Heretofore we have been few in number, and have been oftentimes violently and bitterly

opposed, nor do I think that there is now any very brilliant prospect of our rising to denominational greatness, and basking in the sunshine of popular applause. And indeed, when I see what the effect of such greatness and applause has been upon some Christian churches, I am disposed to say, “God defend us from power and popularity, for these are more dangerous foes than all the contumely, and persecution, and straitened circumstances with which we have had to struggle in the times gone by.” I do hope, and verily believe that we have a far purer object in view than mere denominational aggrandisement, and that we shall be content, as heretofore we have been content, come evil report or good, to have the testimony of a clear conscience that according to the best of our knowledge and to the utmost of our power we have faithfully tried to maintain God’s truth against the commandments and traditions of men.

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A Sermon

Delivered on Sunday Morning, April 14th, 1861,

by the

REV. C. H. SPURGEON

At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

**“The LORD shall count, when he writeth up the people, that
this man was born there.” — Psalm 87:6**

SEVERAL TIMES, according to the record of Scripture, there was a census taken of the people of God. When Jacob went down into Egypt all his offspring were numbered, and they were three score and ten souls. How small, then, the visible Church of Christ! It could be contained within a single tent; it had sprung of but a solitary man. All those, then, who feared Jehovah, so far as it is known to us, were of the race of Jacob. There was another census taken when the people came up out of Egypt, and if you read in the earlier chapter of the Book of Numbers you will be astonished at the wonderful multiplication which had taken place in the land of Egypt, the house of bondage. Truly, the more they were oppressed the more they multiplied. There were six hundred thousand footmen, all prepared for battle, besides women and children, and aged men who were exempt from the toils of warfare. There was another census taken after the people had been thirty-eight years in the wilderness. Through their sin they had not been multiplied. So many had fallen in the wilderness, that notwithstanding the natural increase, the population stood at very nearly the same rate, or — taking the armed men as the

standard — about two thousand less than it was when they first entered into the howling wilderness. You have further on in history another instance of the taking of the census, or rather of an attempt to do it, when David commanded Joab, the captain of the host, to go through all the tribes and number the people from Dan even to Beersheba. The people were God's people. When he numbered them well and good; but none but the sovereign power has a right to take the census of the people. David, forgetting that he was only God's viceroy, that he stood not as king in Israel, except as under the constitution which God had established, presumes to invade the priestly prerogative and commit to Joab the Levitical office of numbering the people, and that without offering the shekels of sanctuary or giving the tribute of redemption. So flagrant was the breach of the laws of Israel, that even Joab was quick to remonstrate. But ere he could effect the task, the Word of God had come out against him, and three days of pestilence, or three years of famine, or a period of flight before their enemies, who should defeat them in war were offered to him as dread alternatives for the punishment of his sin. So did God seem to say, "Jehovah shall write up the people, but David shall not." God shall count his redeemed, and number his elect, but man shall not venture to touch the mysterious roll. None but the Lamb shall take that book and open every seal. That Lamb's book of life is not to be read except by the eyes of him who bought the people with his blood; nor are the people to pass under any hand to be counted except under the hand of him that telleth them, even the great Shepherd himself. My brethren, according to the text, there is one day to be a great census taken of the Church of God. It is concerning that one census, final and decisive, that I shall have to speak this morning. May God grant that of all of us it may be said, when the Lord writeth up the people, "This man was born there."

Concerning this writing up of the census I shall take four or five points. First, we shall notice *what this writing will involve* “when the Lord writeth up the people;” secondly, *whose names will not be found written in the census*; thirdly, *whose names will be there*; fourthly, *who will write up the people*; and then; lastly; *why will it be done at all?*

I. When this dispensation shall come to its close, when the Lord Jesus Christ shall come in the clouds of heaven, when all his *people* shall be gathered to him to share his splendours and to delight themselves in his triumph, then we believe the Lord shall write up his people. **WHAT WILL THIS WRITING BE?**

There will be written in this census nothing but *personal matters*. If you note my text, it says, “This man was born there.” They are not taken in the plural — these men. They are not taken as a corporate body — this nation, this church, this family — but one by one each man’s name shall be found either written there or else left out. Personal matters alone will come into the great census paper of eternity. There is no truth which we need more frequently to hold up before the eyes of our people than the truth that nothing but personal godliness will ever avail. If you could trace your pedigree through a line of saints up to the apostles, nay, up to Mary herself, the mother of the Savior, yet, unless you did yourself believe in Christ and had yourself been the subject of the personal change, which is called regeneration you should in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. No connections, however admirable; no relations, however desirable, no proxies, however excellent, shall ever avail for any dying man. We must ourselves stand before God, each man for himself to be acquitted, or to be condemned to hear, “Come, thou blessed,” or “Depart, thou cursed one.” There may be and there always must be, when we take men in the mass, (and God often in his providence deals with men in the mass) there may be innocent persons who

suffer in the common calamity. There are likewise wicked men who rejoice in common mercies. But at the last the evil shall be unto the evil, and the good shall be unto the good. The wheat shall be unmixed with chaff; the wine shall no more be mingled with the water; the gold shall not become dimmed through alloy. God's people, each of them personally accepted, and the wicked, each of them personally condemned, shall meet their final doom. See to it, sire, each one of you, that you personally have an interest in the blood of the Lamb.

Again, you will perceive that this great census deals not merely with personal matters, but with *vital* matters which concern a man's birth. Here you have it that this man was *born* there. 'Tis true the things we have thought and those we have done shall be mentioned at the last, but not for their own sakes. They shall be mentioned only as means of proving that we were born again, or else as evidence that regeneration had never taken place in us. The vital question which the Lord's great day shall touch will be this — "Was that man ever called from darkness into marvelous light? Was that heart ever turned from stone to flesh? Were those eyes ever opened to the celestial light? Were those ears ever ready to listen to the divine command? Was there a vital, radical change insomuch that old things had passed away and all things had become new, for if not, in the golden roll of the Redeemed our names can have no place. When the muster-roll is called, our names will not be mentioned, and we shall stand shivering with dismay because our names are left out when God calleth, "gather my saints together unto me, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice."

Remark, once more, the matters with which the census shall have to do will be *decisive*. Perhaps, my hearer, your name could not be written to-day among the regenerate, but there is hope yet, and we trust by God's grace ere you go hence, you

may have a portion among the sanctified. If we could take today the number of God's people, at present converted, I thank God that before another hour it would be imperfect, for there would have been others added to the visibly called of God. But the last census shall be. To its number none shall be added; from its multitude, none subtracted.

Once let that be taken, and the angel shall cry in heaven, "He that is holy let him be holy still;" and his voice shall reverberate to hell, but other words shall he sound there: "He that is filthy let him be filthy still." That shall be, the last polling of the people, the last counting of the jewels and casting away of the counterfeits, the last bringing in of the sheep and banishment of the goats. This makes it all-important that you and I should know to-day whether, "when the Lord writeth up the people, it shall be said that this man was born there." Oh that we were wise to look into futurities! We are so bat-like, we see but so small a distance. We only see time and its trickeries, its paint, its guilt. Oh that we were wise that we understood this, that we would remember our latter end! So that come the census day when it may, we may each have our name written beneath our Lord the Lamb, in some humble place among the chosen of the Lord our God. This census, then, will involve — personal, vital, decisive matters.

II. Let us now ask — WHOSE NAMES WILL NOT BE FOUND WRITTEN WHEN THE LORD COUNTETH UP HIS PEOPLE?

Now this is a question which no man can answer to the full. But with God's Word before us, supposing that the characters I mention shall be at the last day what they are now, we can tell you with a decision that is infallible, whose names will not be found there.

And first, for these are the most likely people to be deceived, the name of the hypocritical Church member will not

be found there. You have entered the church for the sake of gain or respectability. You have made a profession which is a lie. You have assumed a garb which is but the sheep's skin while you yourself remain a wolf. You have a name to live, but are dead. You have whitewashed the sepulcher, but a sepulcher it is still. Oh sir! it is one thing to have deceived the elder or the deacon; it is one thing to have misled and to have cajoled the minister; it is one thing to have won the respect and the esteem of the church, but it is another thing to escape undetected from the fiery glance which can read the secret things of the belly, and before which even hell and death are naked and unveiled. Do not, I pray thee, hops that thy masquerading, thy spiritual pretences shall be of any avail before him. He shall rend thy garments in pieces, and thou shalt stand naked to be the target for all his arrows, thou shalt be banished to the place where the hissing, the rebuke, and the reproach of all the ungodly shall descend for ever and ever. I tell thee thy name may be in the church-book without a blot, and no man may have suspected thee, but except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Church members, try yourselves, the oldest and the best of you, ay, and do thou try thyself, O preacher, lest after having preached to others, thou also shouldst be a castaway. Oh, let us never take our religion from other men's opinions, not even for the opinion of the best of men! I would not be satisfied even with the assurance of an apostle, if it came from his own judgment, we must have the assurance of the Holy Spirit, the witness within us that we are born of God.

Again, among the names that will not be found there, we may mention the man who is a *mere hearer*. How many there are among you to-day whom we could but describe as hearers only! The ear is tickled, the mind is interested, the gaze is fixed upon the preacher. Tis well. God be thanked that so many are willing to listen to the Word of God. But to be a hearer and not a

believer will involve no salvation. To have had the seed sown, but for the seed never to have taken root will never give a harvest. To have had the light shining upon sightless eyeballs will have been of no avail or giving of sight. To have sat in these pews, though some of you may sit for twenty years, unless the Word be received into the heart through the grace of God, will minister rather to your damnation than to your salvation. Mark this, my hearers, if we are not “a savor of life unto life,” we must be “a savor of death unto death,” and in either case, we are unto God a sweet-smelling savor as well in those that perish as in those that are saved. I know what a great many people think if they are regular church-goers, if they are always in their place twice on the Sunday, that is as much as can be expected of them. I tell you, sirs, that you may make your church-going into a sin if you go to hear a gospel which you reject. If you rest in your church-goings or your chapel-goings, you have rested in a lie, you have built upon the sand, and in the last great day if you shall cry, “We have eaten, we have drunk with thee, and thou hast taught in our streets,” he shall say, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, I never knew you depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.”

There is a man yonder too whose name is not written and will not be found written there, unless some great change shall take place — I mean yonder young man, who in saying, “I will repent, I will seek a Saviour; I would be washed in his blood.” Young man! you have said that twenty times before. You said it when you left your mother’s roof, and she rejoiced in the resolution. You said it when last the fever came into the establishment and you lay sick. You said it, sir, when last time conscience pricked you, because you had retired to rest at night and had omitted the prayer in which you had been so early trained; and you say it to-day. But “unstable as water thou Come not excel.” Thy promise made in thine own strength is

but a broken reed; thy penitence is as the morning cloud and as the early dew. Thou art paving thy road to hell with thy good intentions. Up, sluggard! up! Pull up those paving-stones, and hurl them at the old fiend who longs to keep thee at this dreary work of making a smooth path to thy destruction. Oh, my dear friends, perhaps one of the worst of Satan's snares is the promissory-note. Under a sermon, when the sinner has been awakened, the devil gets him to say, "Well, I will think of these things by- and-bye." As you heard the other night, indifferent people are the most hopeless of all, because even when aroused, procrastination lulls them to sleep again. If Felix had hastily said to Paul, "Paul, I hate and despise thee, thou art an impostor;" there had been some little hope that in his quiet mood reason might reverse the words which he had uttered, but when he said in bland tones, tones which deceived himself though not the apostle, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a more convenient season I will send for thee;" then might you have read upon the brow of Felix with the spiritual eye these words — "This is one who knows the truth, but follows not its dictates. His damnation is as sure as it is just." I had infinitely rather hear, as I have sometimes heard, and as we constantly do, words of abuse against the minister, and language of hatred against the gospel, than I would hear some of you who speak fair but mean foul, who protest but belie, whose resolutions are like bad money or forged cheques, which he that taketh loseth thereby, and he that believeth is deceived. Your name, sir, unless there be something more than this, will never be found written there.

Scarcely necessary is it I think to say that those men who are *living in vice and open sin, and who die as they live*, will never find their names written there. No drunkard shall ever reel across the golden streets. No oath of the blasphemer shall ever shock the ear of angel. No light frothy or lascivious song shall ever

taint the ear of perfection. Eden is not the place for thieves. Paradise is not the spot for harlots. Men and women who die with such blots upon their character, and such sins upon their souls shall find at heaven's gate the angels say, "There shall in no wise enter here anything that defileth."

And you, too, ye *moralists*, against whose character no accusation can be brought if you never received the new heart, you will be as surely shut out as the immoral. The honest tradesman, who was only dishonest to his God, shall find dishonesty there to be damnable. The upright man, who had no crooked ways except towards Christ and his holy gospel, shall find those crooked ways destroy his soul. The man who said he loved his neighbor but forgot his God, shall find that "the wicked shall be cast into hell with all the nations that forget God." Oh, my dear hearers, except ye have faith in Christ, except ye have the Spirit of God in you, except ye repent and be converted, there is a far sterner than iron and more endurable than steel, which will shut you out of the place of happiness, and in the number of the saints your names shall never be found.

III. We shall now turn to a more pleasing work — WHOSE NAME WILL BE FOUND THERE?

When you made up the census paper last Monday Morning, there may have been a thief in the house in the night. I suppose you did not put his name down. There may have been some person who, that night, knocked at the door, and was for some short time under your roof, but who went out from you because he was not of you, for if he had been of you, doubtless he would have continued with you I know, that you did not put his name there. You recorded there the names of the inhabitants of the house, but of none beside. Now, then, it shall be so at the last great census taking.

Whose name shall be there? We reply, there shall be the name of every soul that ever believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, whosoever fled to the cross for refuge whosoever turned his tearful eye to Calvary as his hope, whosoever stretched out his finger to touch the hem of the sacred garment, shall find his name surely there as well as the mightiest of the prophets or the chief of the apostles. Brethren, we will take those who think themselves most likely to be left out, and we remark that there will be found there the name of the poorest. When this last census was taken, the paper was sent as much to the hovel of the poor in St. Giles's, as to the palace of the rich in St. James's. None were left out. The Act of Parliament was not passed to take a census of the rich: it was not needed that there should only be those written who paid a certain amount of tax; but as they were all subjects, the name of the beggar was recorded in the register as well as the name and title of the peer. So shall it be at the last. If thou hast believed in Christ, though thou didst never glitter on the pages of heraldry, though rags were thy dress and penury thy portion, yet in as fair a place as those who have worn a coronet and have yet feared God, shalt thou find thy name. Oh! let us never imagine that because a man wears fustian, or is clothed in corduroy, he has the slightest less reason to hope that he shall be saved.

Not many great men after the flesh not many mighty are chosen, but God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, to be helm of the kingdom, so that if there be an advantage either way, it is where some would dream it should least be given. But, then, as the poorest, so the weakest saint shall be found there. You did not omit the name of your daughter because with some spinal complaint she has been so long afflicted that she can scarcely sit upright. You put her name there as well as that of your stalwart son, who could boldly wield arms if it were needed to defend this country from

the invader. And, I take it, when you wrote out the list, the infant child had a place as well as the full-grown man. You felt that the census would not be complete, and your family-list would not be well made out even if that infant whose voice was but a cry, and whose life was but a pain, should miss his place. All were recorded there. And so, at the last, Benjamin shall be written as well as Judah, Mephibosheth as well as David; he that is lame in the fact as well as the giant in strength. Father Earnest and Mr. Great-Heart shall have their place, but Mr. Fearing and Miss Much-Afraid shall not miss their portion. Every one of those who believed in Christ, though their faith was but as a grain of mustard-seed, and their spiritual life was but as the smoking flax, shall find their names written there. I would that I could speak out this truth so that the castdown and the all-but destroyed could lay hold upon it. Art thou miserable to-day? Thy misery doth not erase thy name. Hast thou sinned, but dost thou cry, "Father, have mercy upon me?" "Thy sin hath not blotted the writing. Engraved as in eternal brass, there stands thy name; the powers of darkness shall never prevail to erase the everlasting characters. Are you to-day so conscious of your unworthiness that you dare not look up? Are you thinking, "If I said 'Abbe, Father' it would be presumption, if I claimed the privilege of a child, it would be arrogance?" Yet if Christ be thine, if thou canst stretch out thy hand now and say,

"My soul would lay her hand
On that dear head of thine,
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin,"

you need not be afraid but that among the blood-bought you shall share your lot.

“Ah! my soul, wilt *thou* be there?” Pass the question now through this vast throng, and let each soul put itself into the balances with this as the test- weight: — “What thinkest thou of Christ? Is he thine only help? Dost thou find cleansing in his blood, healing in his wounds, life in his death, heaven in his pains?” If so, thou shalt be found when the Lord writeth up the people, and of thee it shall be said, “That man was born in her.”

IV. I shall now turn your attention to the next point of the subject, briefly. **WHO IS TO MAKE OUT THE CENSUS PAPER?**

“The Lord shall count when *he* writeth up the people.” But why shall the Lord make out the census? The first reason is — *Who else should do it?* Suppose our enemies had the making out of the roll! “Oh, Lord, deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies, for false witnesses are risen up against me and such as breathe out cruelty.” I think there is none among us who would be willing to have his eternal fate decided by an evil and gainsaying world. If we could put the pen into the hand of the wicked they would write down the offscourings, but omit the jewels. They would surely record the base and the reprobate, while the chosen and precious would have no lot or portion. Imagine for a moment, my dear friends, that the pen could be given to the old Pope of Rome, and that he had the writing up of the people. Now, my lord Pope, with your triple crown upon your head, write them out. I am sure he would omit yours and mine because we are not obedient to the pontifical see, and even if he were under authority and command, I am sure he would make a great splutter in trying to write the name “Martin Luther,” and he would throw down his pen and utterly refuse to obey, if he had to write the glorious name of John Calvin. Well, thanks be to God, the pen is not in the hand of that arch-deceiver, nor in that of any of our enemies, but the Lord shall make out the census himself. Suppose now we put the pen into

the hand of Bigotry — Bigotry, who lives not quite so far off as Italy — but takes up her residence in our own land, and hard by our own abode. I think I see her with her face bitter as wormwood and with her eyes full of darkness, and she, having written all the names down, reads — “There be few that shall be saved; they be so few that a child can count them.” She makes a dash against the name of this man, for he did not hold all the five points of a certain system. She runs her pen right through another man’s, because he dared to preach to sinners: and she takes a double dip for another, who had once ventured to say that faith was the duty of man, and unbelief was a high and damning crime. Oh, how few would ever go to heaven, if Bigotry had the making out of the census paper!

I might thus run through the list of all the enemies of Christ’s Church, and show you that it would not be safe to trust any of them, from the devil downward to the Pope upward, with the making up of the list of those who shall enter into the king’s palace. But, suppose our friends had the task. “Yes,” saith one, “let my mother have the pen.” Ay, if this were left with our dear friends, they would not be long before some of them would write in bold text hand, the name of their most reprobate son, or most hardened daughter. Affection in this world overmasters the understanding: and doubtless there would be many in heaven who would defile its purity, if affection had the keeping of the gates, and if understanding had no place.

Yes, but young man, your mother cannot save you. She can pray and plead, but if your iniquity be written as with an iron pen, and graven on the horns of the altar, her tears cannot — sold even though they be — eat out the dire inscription from the brass. You must be washed in blood, or else a baptism of tears will not avail. You must have the Spirit of Christ, for your mother’s spirit cannot bear you on its wings to heaven. Indeed,

dear friends, if the making out of the census paper were left even to ourselves, it were left to the wrong persons, for I taken that the great end of all God's dispensations is his glory, and if our entrance to heaven were left to ourselves, there are many who would go there with a be on their lips, and with blasphemy in their hearts. They would go to glory fresh from their sins; rising from beds of lusts to beds of bliss; they would go red with murder, black with grime, dripping with the oozings of their vice, and heaven would become a Sodom, and Paradise an Aceldama, the throne of God would be no better than the throne of Moloch, and the place of perfection would not be preferable to hell itself. God, and God only — God the only wise — shall have the writing up of the people, for there is no one to be found but God who could do it.

There is a second reason which I think will strike the spiritual mind with force. "The Lord shall count when he writeth up the people." Instructions were given at the late census, that the paper should be made out by "*the head of the family*." Now I suppose, though it is not always the fact, that the husband is the head of the household and that the father stands in the position of the head of the family. Well, then, the Church must not make up the census paper for she is the spouse. But he who is head over all things to the Church, which is his body he by whose name the whole family in heaven and earth are named, he shall "Write up the people." It were, indeed, impious for you or me, it would bring down upon our heads a penalty as heavy as that which fell on David, if we thought we could write up the people. We have said perhaps, "There are only such-and-such people that shall be saved," and we have turned about and said of another, "Lord, what shall this man do?" And like John, loving spirit though he was, we have been ready to call fire from heaven upon some, and to say of others, "Master, forbid them, because they follow not with us." But, brethren I

hope we have done with all that now. We believe the Lord knows them that are his, they are a multitude that no man can number, and no man should ever attempt the task. They are more than bigotry would include, they are fewer than a latitudinarian charity would affirm. But be they more or be they less, they are known only to the eternal mind, and this is a secret into which we must not pry. The angelic footstep treads not here. Let us not be rash and foolish, to pry where angels stand back, and do not desire to look.

I would give another reason why God and God alone, should make up this paper had I not already anticipated myself. I meant to have said because he is the *only wise God*. You know it is said in Scripture that God is wise, but then it is added he is “Only Wise.” There is not another wise being upon the face of the earth. There is not another wise being, even in heaven itself. God is only wise. Even the heathen knew this. You will remember when some fishermen had found a spoil, the old Greek legend says, “Not knowing how to divide it they repaired to the Delphic oracle, which said, ‘Let the wisest have it.’” They sent it to Thales, the Miletian, they sent it to Solon, it went the round of the wise men of Greece: but they all refused it. They said no, confessed they were not the wisest, till at last one of them advised to send it to the altar of the god’s, for the gods were the wisest of all. What the heathen thus pictured in poetic fiction we know to be true. We will not question this man or that, this denomination or that. It is not for us to use our fingers to count the brands plucked from the burning but to use our hands to pluck them from the fire, and we will pass the roll to the only wise God, and he shall at the last decide whether they be his or not.

V. I now come to my last point. May the Spirit of God bless it to us, and seal it on our hearts. **WHY WILL THE CENSUS BE TAKEN AT ALL?**

Why should God write up the people? We answer, not that God may receive fresh information. He knoweth all things. Not that there is any fear of God's purposed number being incomplete. The Lord knoweth them that are his, and this is one of the stones on which the security of the Church is built. Why then? Of course, we are dealing now with a noble picture, and you must view it as a picture, though within its bowels it bears a mighty fact. The Lord counts up his people, in the first place, *to show his value of them*. You remember that passage, "They shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I make up my jewels," as though the jewels had to be put each into their proper place, and then the divine eye should run along them all and say "Yes, they are made up. Those in the gasket tally in number with those in the inventory. They are made up. Neither ruby, nor emerald, nor pearl is lacking. They are all there." God makes up his jewels; it is impossible for the human mind to conceive how dear is the poorest believer to the heart of his Father — dearer than the widow's only child to her soul — dearer than the new-made bridegroom to his bride — dearer than life to those who stand in peril — dearer than honor to those who could give life rather than sacrifice their integrity. We love, but we love not as God loves. Love with us may be an abiding passion, but with God it is an all- penetrating principle. Of us it may be said, that we are loving, but of God, that he is love itself. And well does the idea of counting up the loved ones set forth the esteem and value which he sets upon them, and the intensity and deep-seatedness of that affection which he bears towards their persons. The Lord will make up his jewels, he will count his sheep; he will remember the children of his family, to see if they be there who were written in the register of old.

Another thought strikes us. The last census shall be taken *to show to Satan his entire defeat*. They are all there, fiend of hell;

they are all there. What didst thou say, “I will pursue, I will overtake; I will divide the spoil, my lust shall be satisfied upon them.” What sayest thou now, fiend of hell? There is not one of them lacking? Thou greedy lion of the pit, hast thou sent one sheep? Has so much as a lamb been dragged to thine infernal den? Ye legion hosts, who with gunning, sharpened by malice, sought to tear from the arms of Christ those whom he had sworn to save, say has the surety done his work or no? Have ye defeated him? Ye have nailed him to the tree; have ye broken his bones, and robbed him of his members? Ye took away his life; could ye keep it? Do they not live because he lives? Ye struggled through eighteen hundred years and more; ye grappled with these poor men and women who wrestled hard with you; did you overcome one of them? You were worsted when you fought with Job in the slippery standing of a dunghill, ye were defeated when ye fought with David on the pinnacle of the palace top and brought him down ye won not the victory when ye seemed to will it over Peter in the hall of Pilate. Ye were defeated not once or twice, but many thousand times in the heirs of life, who fought with various success in time, but with sure success as time merged into eternity. Oh! all ye hosts, look there and be ashamed, and let the songs of the white-robed be howlings to you; let the shoutings of the complete host of the redeemed sink into your ears like death-knells and re-begin your hell, for you are defeated, you are octet down; the pride of your looks is lowered, and Jehovah alone is exalted in that day.

Yet once more, methinks the counting up of the redeemed will be performed for another reason, to let all men see that *the great riddle which has distracted human intellect was no riddle but a fact* — and facts are not riddles. What is the great mystery? It is that God degrees, that man acts; yet that God’s degrees and man acts tally with one another. Of old, before the sockets of the

eternal hills were carved out of the enduring granite, before the peaks lifted themselves white with snow to glitter in the sun, ere stars had visited the mountain summit and looked down upon a world that had fallen into sin; ay! when this world was not, when it was uncreate, sleeping in the womb of the divine thought as yet unborn, when suns and stars and this brave universe itself had not begun to be formed, then in his book his chosen were all written, and the members of Christ fixed and ordained. That book was closed and sealed; it has not been opened. Now what effect can a book, a clasped sealed book, have upon the deeds of men? “None,” say you. “None,” say I. The decree of God as such hath no effect on any man. There it is; there it standeth. But see! the world is all confusion. Never were the waves of the sea more wanton in their play.

Man sins, rebels, revolts, revolts again; the checks of mercy hold him not, he breaks the bit, he scorns the yoke, and yet despite the hardness and the freedom of man to rebel against his God, I see at last through grace omnipotent a multitude come streaming slowly in year after year through the golden gates, and at last I hear the gate closed. I see it barred, and how strange shall it seem as that great sealed book is now unclasped, it is found that all who were written there have come, nay come as they were written, come at the hour ordained, come in the place predestinated, come by the means foreknown, come as God would have them come, and thus free agency did not defeat predestination, and man's will did not thwart the eternal will. God is glorified and man free. Man — the man as he proudly calls himself — has obeyed God as truly as though he knew what was in God's book, and had studied to make the degree of God the very rule and method of his life. Glorious shall it be when thus that book shall prove the mystic energy which went out from between the folded leaves — the mysterious Spirit that emanated from the eternal throne — that

unseen, unmanifested, sometimes unrecognised mysterious power, which bowed the will and led it in silken chains, which opened up the understanding and led it from darkness into light, and melted the heart and moved the Spirit, and won the entire man to the obedience of the truth as it was in Jesus.

I will say no more except this. Shall I be there? Will you be there? I cannot put the question better than in the words of that solemn hymn —

“When thou, my righteous Judge, shalt come
To fetch thy ransom’d people home
Shall I among them stand?
Shall such a worthless worm as I,
Who sometimes am afraid to die,
Be found at thy right hand?
I love to meet among them now,
Before thy gracious feet to bow
Though vilest of them all:
But can I bear the piercing thought. —
What if my name should be left out,
When thou for them shalt call?
Prevent, prevent it by thy grace;
Be thou, dear Lord, my hiding-place,
In this the accepted day:
Thy pard’ning voice, O let me hear,
To still my unbelieving fear;
Nor let me fall, I pray.
Let me among thy saints be found,
Whenever the archangel’s trump shall sound,
To see thy smiling face;
Then loudest of the crowd I’ll sing,
While heaven’s resounding mansions ring
With shouts of sovereign grace.”

May that be your prayer and mine. May God hear it, and hear it he will, if to that prayer we add the obedience of faith. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved and thy house.” Sinner, believe. God help thee to believe this morning for his name’s sake.

383 THE MISSIONARIES' CHARGE – MATT. 28:18-19

A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Morning, April 21st, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth, go ye, therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the son, and of the Holy Ghost.” — Matthew 28:18-19

WHILE I WAS MEDITATING in private upon this text I felt myself carried away by its power. I was quite unable calmly to consider its terms, or to investigate its argument. The *command* with which the text concludes repeated itself again, and again, and again in my ears, till I found it impossible to study, for my thoughts were running hither and thither, asking a thousand questions, all of them intended to help me in answering for myself the solemn enquiry, “How am *I* to go and teach *all* nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost?” The practical lesson seemed to me to overwhelm in my mind the argument of which that lesson is but a conclusion, “Go ye and teach all nations.” My ears seemed to hear it as if Christ were then speaking it to *me*. I could realize his presence by my side. I thought I could see him lift his pierced hand, and hear him speak, as he was wont to speak, with authority, blended with meekness, “Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the All-glorious

God.” Oh! I would that the Church could hear the Savior addressing these words to her now, for the words of Christ are living words, not having power in them yesterday alone, but to-day also. The injunctions of the Savior are perpetual in their obligation, they were not binding upon apostles merely, but upon *us* also, and upon every Christian does this yoke fall, “Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” We are not exempt to-day from the service of the first followers of the Lamb, our marching orders are the same as theirs, and our Captain requires from us obedience as prompt and perfect as from them. Oh that his message may not fall upon deaf ears, or be heard by stolid souls!

Brethren, the heathen are perishing; shall we let them perish? *His* name is blasphemed, shall we be quiet and still? The honor of Christ is cast into the dust, and his foes revile his person and resist his throne, shall we his soldiers suffer this, and not find our hands feeling for the hilt of our sword, the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God? Our Lord delayeth his coming; shall we begin to sleep, or to eat, or to be drunken? Shall we not rather gird up the loins of our mind, and cry unto him, “Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly?” The scoffing sceptics of these last days have said that the anticipated conquest of the world for Christ is but a dream, or an ambitious thought, which crossed our leader’s mind, but which never is to be accomplished. It is asserted by some that the superstitions of the heathen are too strong to be battered down by our teachings, and that the strongholds of Satan are utterly impregnable against our attacks. Shall it be so? Shall we be content foolishly to sit still? Nay, rather let us work out the problem, let us prove the promise of God to be true; let us prove the words of Jesus to be words of soberness; let us show the efficacy of his blood and the invincibility of his Spirit, by

going in the spirit of faith, teaching all nations, and winning them to the obedience of Christ our Lord.

I do not know how to begin to preach this morning, but still it seems to me, standing here, as if I heard that voice saying, “Go thou, therefore, and teach all nations;” and my soul sometimes pants and longs for the liberty to preach Christ where he was never preached before; not to build upon another man’s foundation, but to go to some untrodden land, some waste where the foot of Christ’s minister was never seen, that there “the military place might be glad for us, and the wilderness rejoice and blossom as the rose.” I have made it a solemn question whether I might not testify in China or India the grace of Jesus, and in the sight of God I have answered it. I solemnly feel that my position in England will not permit my leaving the sphere in which I now am, or else to-morrow I would offer myself as a missionary. Oh, do none of you hear the call this morning? You that are free from so great a work as that which is cast upon me — you that have talents as yet undevoted to any special end, and powers of being as yet unconsecrated to any given purpose, and unconfined to any one sphere; do you not hear my Master saying in tones of plaintive sorrow, blended with an authority which is not to be denied, “Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost?” Oh that I could preach like Peter the Hermit — a better crusade than he! Oh that there were might in some human lip to move the thousands of our Israel to advance at once, unanimously and irresistibly to the world’s conquest, like one tremendous tide rising from the depths of the ocean, to sweep over the sands, the barren sands which are now given up to desolation and death? Oh that once again the voice of thunder could be heard, and the lightning spirit could penetrate each heart, that as one man the entire Church might take the

marching orders of her Lord, and go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of Israel's God! O Lord, if *we* fail to speak, fail not thou to speak; and if we know not how to bear thy burden, or express thine awful thoughts, yet speak thou with that all- constraining silent voice which well-trained ears can hear, and make thy servants obedient to thee now, for Christ's sake!

“Awake, thou Spirit, who of old
Didst live the watchman of the Church's youth,
Who faced the foe, unshrinking, bold
Who witness'd day and night the eternal truth
Whose voices through the world are ringing still,
And bringing hosts to know and do thy will!
Oh that thy fire were kindled soon,
That swift from land to land its flame might leap!
Lord, give us but this priceless boon
Of faithful servants, fit for thee to reap
The harvest of the soul; look down and view
How great the harvest, yet the laborers few.
Oh haste to help ere we are lost!
Send forth evangelists, in spirit strong,
Arm'd with thy Word, a dauntless host,
Bold to attack the rule of ancient wrong
And let them all the earth for thee reclaim,
To be thy kingdom, and to know thy name.”

This morning we shall first dwell a little while upon the *command*, and then secondly, we shall enlarge upon the argument. There is an argument, as you will perceive, “Go ye, *therefore*, and teach all nations.”

I. First, my brethren, and very briefly indeed a few things about the **COMMAND**.

And we must remark, first what a singularly loving one it is. Imagine Mahomet on his dying bed saying to his disciples, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth;” what would be his command? “Go ye, therefore, with sharp scimitars, and propound faith in the prophet, or death as the dread alternative avenge me of the men who threw stones at the prophet, make their houses a dunghill, and cut them in pieces for vengeance is mine, and God’s prophet *must* be avenged of his enemies.” But Christ, though far more despised and persecuted of men, and having a real power which that pretended prophet never had, says to his disciples, as he is about to ascend to heaven, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth; go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.” It is the voice of love, not of wrath. “Go and teach them the power of my blood to cleanse, the willingness of my arms to embrace, the yearning of my heart to save!

Go and teach them. Teach them no more to despise me, no more to think my Father an angry and implacable Deity. Teach them to bow the knee, and kiss the Son, and find peace for all their troubles, and a balm for all their woes in me. Go ye; speak as I have spoken; weep as I have wept; invite as I have invited; exhort, entreat, beseech and pray, as I have done before you. Tell them to come unto me, if they be weary and heavy laden, and *I* will give them rest; and say unto them, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he should turn unto me and live.’” What a generous and gracious command is that of the text, “Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

Note, too, how exceedingly plain is the command, “Go ye, *teach* all nations.” The Romish Church has misunderstood this.

She says, “Go ye, mystify all nations; sound in their ears a language once living, but now dead; take to them the Latin tongue, and let that be sounded with all the harmony of sweet music, and they will be converted; erect the sumptuous altar; clothe the priest in mystic garments; celebrate mysterious rites; and make the heathen wonder; dazzle them with splendor; amaze them with mystery.” But, “Nay,” says Christ, “nay, go ye and *teach*.” Why, it is the mother’s work with her child; it is the tutor’s work with the boy and with the girl — “go ye, and teach.” How simple! Illustrate; explain, expound; tell; inform; narrate. Take from them the darkness of ignorance, reveal to them the light of revelation. Teach! Be content to sit down, and tell them the very plainest and most common things. It is not your eloquence that shall convert them; it is not your gaudy language or your polished periods that shall sway their intellects. Go and teach them. Teach them! Why, my hearer, I say again, this is a word which has to do with the rudiments of knowledge. We do not preach to children; we teach them; and we are not so much to preach to nations, that word seems too big and great for the uncivilized and childish people; go ye, and teach them first the very simplicities of the cross of Christ.

And note how he puts it next. Who are to be taught, “Go ye and teach all nations.” The Greek has his philosophers, teach *him*, he is but a child; he is a fool, though he thinketh himself to be wise. There be polite nations which have a literature of their own, far larger and more extensive than the literature of the Christian: teach them nevertheless, they are to be *taught* and unless they are willing to take the learner’s place, and to become as little children, they can in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. Do not debate and argue with them; put not yourself with them upon their level as a combatant concerning certain dogmas; insist upon it that *I* have sent you — sent you to teach the most erudite and profoundly learned; and when you shall

claim it, I am with you always to back your claim, and men shall be willing to sit at your feet to be taught the name of Jesus.

I do not know whether *all* our missionaries have caught the idea of Christ – “Go ye and *teach* all nations,” but many of them have, and these have been honored with many conversions. The more fully they have been simple teachers, not philosophers of the Western philosophy, not eager disputants concerning some English dogma, I say the more plainly they have gone forth as teachers sent from God to teach the world, the more successful have they been. “Go ye, therefore, and teach.” Some may think, perhaps, there is less difficulty in teaching the learned than in teaching the uncivilized and barbarous. There is the same duty to the one as to the other: “Go and teach.” “But they brandish the tomahawk.” Teach them, and lie down and sleep in their hut, and they shall marvel at your fearlessness and spare your life. “But they feed on the blood of their fellows, they make a bloody feast about the cauldron in which a man’s body is the horrible viand.” *Teach* them and they shall empty their war- kettle, and they shall bury their swords, and bow before you, and acknowledge King Jesus. “But they are brutalised, they have scarce a language — a few clicking sounds make up all that they can say.” Teach them, and they shall speak the language of Canaan, and sing the songs of heaven. The fact has been proved, brethren, that there are no nations incapable of being taught, nay, that there are no nations incapable afterwards of teaching others. The Negro slave has perished under the lash, rather than dishonor his Master. The Esquimaux has climbed his barren steeps, and borne his toil, while he has recollected the burden which Jesus bore. The Hindoo has patiently submitted to the loss of all things, because he loved Christ better than all. Feeble Malagasay women have been prepared to suffer and to die, and have taken joyfully suffering for Christ’s sake. There has been heroism in every

land for Christ; men of every color and of every race have died for *him*; upon his altar has been found the blood of all kindreds that be upon the face of the earth. Oh! tell me not they cannot be taught. Sirs, they can be taught to die for Christ; and this is more than some of you have learned. They can rehearse the very highest lesson of the Christian religion — that self-sacrifice which knows not itself but gives up all for him. At this day, there are Karen missionaries preaching among the Karens with as fervid an eloquence as ever was known by Whitfield, there are Chinese teaching in Borneo, Sumatra, and Australia, with as much earnestness as Morison or Milne first taught in China. There are Hindoo evangelists who are not ashamed to have given up the Brahminical thread, and to eat with the Pariah, and to preach with him the riches of Christ. There have been men found of every class and kind, not only able to be taught, but able to become teachers themselves, and the most mighty teachers too, of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Well was that command warranted by future facts, when Christ said, “Go ye, teach all nations.”

But, brethren, the text says, “*baptizing them*.” They are to be taught, and afterwards they are to be baptized. I know not why it is that we yield to the superstitions of our Christian brethren, so much as to use the word *baptize* at all. It is not an English, but a Greek word. It has but one meaning, and cannot bear another. Throughout all the classics, without exception, it is not possible to translate it correctly, except with the idea of immersion; and believing this, and knowing this, if the translation is not complete, we will complete it this morning. “Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, *immersing* them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Now, I think that our Missionary Society, while it may take precedence in matters of time — for it was the first that was ever commenced with the exception of the Moravians — ought

also to take precedence in matters of purity, because we can carry out this text in every country, teaching first and baptizing afterwards. We do not understand the philosophy of baptizing, and afterwards teaching. We hold that we must teach first, and then, when men are disciples, we are to baptize them. Not the nations; the Greek does not bear that interpretation, but those who have been disciples we are to baptize into the Sacred Name. We think that our brethren do serious damage to the Gospel by baptizing children. We do not think their error a little one. We know it does not touch a vital point; but we do believe that infant baptism is the prop and pillar of Popery, and it being removed, Popery and Puseyism become at once impossible. You have taken away all idea of a national godliness and a national religion, when you have cut away all liberty to administer Christian ordinances to unconverted persons. We cannot see any evil which would follow, if our brethren would renounce their mistake; but we can see abundant mischief which their mistake has caused, and in all kindness, but with all fidelity, we again enter our solemn protest against their giving baptism to any but disciples, to any but those who are the followers of the Lamb. Throw down her hedges? Give her supper and her baptism to those that are not Christ's people? Break down her walls? Remove her barricades? God forbid!

Except a man be renewed in heart, we dare not allow him to participate in the ordinances which belong to Christ's Church. Oh! it is a disastrous thing to call unconverted children Christians, or to do anything which may weaken their apprehension of the great fact, that until they be converted they have no part or lot in this matter. Brethren, if you differ from me on this point, bear with me, for my conscience will not let me conceal this solemn truth. To you who agree with me I say, while our other friends can do in some things more than we can, — and we rejoice in their efforts, and would heartily bless

God that they have shown more activity than ourselves, — yet we ought to be ashamed of ourselves if we are a whit behind. We are a body of Christians who can fairly and purely teach and baptize; we can obey this command of Christ abroad, as well as at home, without running counter to our practice in one place by our practice in the other; we ought to be first and foremost, and if we be not, shame shall cover us for our unfaithfulness. Again, I say, I hear that voice ringing in the Baptist's ear, above that of any other man, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

I have endeavored to be brief, but I find I have been long, and therefore pass at once to the argument with which the text commences.

II. The **ARGUMENT** is this: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth, go ye, *therefore*, and teach all nations."

Three things here. Christ had suffered, bled and died; he had now risen from the dead. As the effect of his finished work, he had as mediator received all power in Heaven and in earth. There is no allusion here to his inherent power that is not given to him: that is his native right; he has, as God, all power in heaven and in earth. The text relates to him as mediator. As mediator, he had not this power once; he was weak, he was despised, he was forsaken even of his God. But now, having finished the work which was given him to do, his Father honors him. He is about to lift him to his right hand, and gives him, as the result of resurrection, all power in heaven and in earth. Three things, then. First, this is the picture of the Church's history, and therefore she should teach all nations. Secondly, this is the Church's right. Thirdly, it is the Church's might; and for all these reasons she ought to teach all nations.

1. First, this is the Church's picture. Christ suffers, bleeds, dies. Do you give up his cause? Do you look upon it as forlorn

and desolate? He is nailed to the tree; the world abhors him, fools gaze, and sinners laugh. Do you lay down your weapons and say, it is idle to defend such a man as this? It is all over now, he bows his head upon the cross. "It is finished," saith he; and do your unbelieving hearts say, "Ay, indeed, it is finished; his career is over, his hopes are blighted, his prospects withered?" Ah! little do you know that his shame was the mother of his future glory; that the stooping was the rising, that the crown of thorns was in fact the fruitful root out of which sprang the eternal crown of glory. He is put into the grave: do you say that there is the grave of all your faith could believe, or your hope could suggest? He rises, brethren, and his resurrection takes effect and fruit from the fact that he died and was buried. Do you not see the picture? We have been sending out heralds of the cross these eighteen hundred years; they have landed upon many a shore to die. Fever has taken off its hundreds, cruel men have slain their scores, from the first day until now, the record of the mission is written in blood. Somewhere or other there always must be martyrs for Christ. It seems as if the Church never could plough a wave without a spray of gore. She is still in Madagascar persecuted, afflicted, tormented, still are her ministers hunted about like partridges upon the mountains, and her blood is dying the shambles of her slayers. Do you give up all hope? Shall we, as we look upon the tombs of our missionaries, say that Christ's cause is dead? Brethren, as you turn over the long roll, and read the names of one after another who sleep in Jesus, shall you say, "Let us close the doors of the mission-house; let us cease our contributions, it is clear the case is hopeless, and the cause can never have success?" Nay, rather, the Church must suffer that she may reign, she must die that she may live, she must be stained with blood, that she may be robed in purple, she must go down into the earth, and seem to be buried and forgotten, that the earth may help the woman,

that she may be delivered of the man child. Courage! courage! courage! The past is hopeful, because to the eye it seemeth hopeless, the cause is glorious, because it has been put to shame. Now, now let us gather the fruits of the bloody sowing; let us now reap the harvest of the deep ploughing of agony and suffering which our ancestors have endured.

I think that no true-hearted Christian will ever give up any enterprise which God has laid upon him, because he fears its ultimate success. “Difficult,” said Napoleon, “is not a French word.” “Doubtful,” is not a Christian word. We are *sure* to succeed; the gospel *must* conquer. It is possible for heaven and earth to pass away, but it is not possible for God’s Word to fail, and therefore it is utterly impossible that any nation, or kindred, or tongue should to the end stand out against the attacks of love, against the invasion of the armies of King Jesus.

Thus, then, you see, a fair argument can be built upon the text. Inasmuch as Christ is to his people a picture of what they are to be, inasmuch as by his suffering all power was given to him in heaven and in earth, so after the sufferings of the Church, the wounds of her martyrs, and the deaths of her confessors, power shall be given to her in heaven and in earth, and she shall reign with Christ over the nations gloriously.

2. We now take a second view of the argument. This is the Church’s *right*. All power is given to Christ in heaven and in earth. What then? Why this. Kings and princes, potentates and power, are ye aware that your thrones have been given away? Do ye know it, ye crowned heads, that your crowns have been given — given away from you to one who claims to be King of kings and Lord of lords? Do ye pass degrees forbidding the gospel to be preached? We laugh at you! Ye have no power to prevent it, for all power is given unto Christ in heaven and in earth. Do ye say that the missionary has no right upon your shore? The virgin daughter of Zion shaketh her head at you,

and laugheth you to scorn. She has right anywhere and everywhere; she has rights in heaven without limit, and rights in earth without bound, for all power is given to her head in heaven and in earth, and she therefore has a patent, a claim which is not to be disputed, to take to herself all countries and all kingdoms, because the power above is given unto Christ. What is that man doing on yonder shore? He has landed on an island in the South Seas; he is an intruder, banish him at once! Sirs, mind what you do, for surely ye fight against God. But the man is sent away, he comes back again or if not he, another. A severer edict is passed this time, "Let us slay him, that the inheritance may still be ours." But another comes, and another, and another. Why do you stand up and take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed? These men are not intruders, they are ambassadors come to make peace, nay, more. They are delegates from heaven, come to learn the rightful heritage of King Jesus.

Ye, in putting them away as intruders, have denied the rights of Christ, but to deny is one thing, and to disprove another. He hath still a right to you, and therefore hath the missionary still a right to come whithersoever he will, preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ. Once or twice in my life I have met with some miserable little ministers, who, when I have gone into a village to preach, have questioned my right to preach in the village, because I ought to have asked them first, or to have consulted them. And can Christian men look on a district as their own dominion, and reckon God's servant as a poacher on their estates, or a brigand in their territories? Is there any place on this earth that belongs to any man so that he can shut out God's ministers? We once for all put our foot upon any claim so ridiculous. Wherever there is found a man, there is the minister free to preach. The whole world is our parish, we know of no fetter upon our feet, and no gag upon

our lips. Though kings should pass laws, the servants of Christ can bear the penalty, but they cannot disobey their Master, though the Emperor should say the gospel should not be preached by any unauthorized denomination in France, as I have heard he has said of late, we care not for him. What cares the Church for a thousand Emperors?

Their resolutions are mockery, their laws waste-paper, the Church never was yet vassal to the state, or servile slave to municipalities and powers, and she neither can nor will be. At all the laws of states, she laughs, and utterly defies them, if they come in the way of the law of Christ which says, "Teach the gospel to every creature." Brethren, I say, the Church has a right anywhere and everywhere — a right, not because she is tolerated; the word is insult, not because the law permits, the law permitting or not permitting, tolerated or untolerated, everywhere beneath the arch of God's heaven, God's servants have a right to preach. Oh that they would claim the right, and in every place teach and preach Jesus Christ continually!

3. But now, lastly, it seems to me that the argument of the text contains the Church's *might*. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth; go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Ye have power to teach, fear not. Let this be your encouragement; you must succeed, you shall prevail. There never lived another man save Christ, who could say, "All power is given me on earth." Canute puts his throne by the side of the sea, but the waves wet his person, and prove to his flattering courtiers that he is but a man. What power have kings over the lightning, of the rushing winds? Can they control the tides, or bid the moon stand still? Power is not given unto man, even upon earth. Much less could any man say, all power in heaven belonged to him. This is a singular expression; one which only could be used by Christ, and if any other should

attempt to use it, it were an imposition, and a blasphemy, but the Lord Jesus Christ can say to-day, as he said then, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”

Let us think, then, all power is given to Christ in providence. Over common daily events he has supreme authority. You have launched upon the sea, upon a mission voyage; he rules the waves, and wings the winds; fear not, for tempest is his trembling slave. You have come near the shore, but there are hidden reefs and sunken rocks. Fear not, for all power is given to him in the lowest deep to guide you safely, and to bring you to your desired haven. A band of men meet you upon the shore, brandishing their weapons. You are unarmed, you have nothing but the Word. You shall now prove that “more is he that is with you than all they that be with them.” Go, in this your might. All power is given to Christ — power over the wills of men, as well as over the waves of the sea. But political occurrences prevent your landing on a certain country, through treaties, or a want of treaties, there is no room for the missionary in such-and-such an empire, *pray*, and the gates shall be opened; *plead*, and the bars of brass shall be cut in twain. Christ has power over politics. He can make wars, and create peace, with a view to the propagation of his Word. He can change the hearts of princes, and preside in the counsels of senates, he can cause nations that have long been shut up, to be opened to the truth. And, indeed, what a wonderful proof we have had of late, that all power belongs unto Christ, for human skill has been yoked to the chariot of the gospel. How wondrously, my brethren, have the inventions of man of late years progressed! How could we have preached the gospel to all nations — how could we have even known that America existed, if it had not been that the Lord put it into the mind of Columbus to discover the New World! And how wearisome our life, if with the ordinary slow navigation of the ancient

times we had to journey among all nations! But now we are carried across the waves so rapidly that distance is annihilated, and time forgotten. Truly God has opened up the world, and brought it to our threshold, if he has not made a smaller world, at least he has made it more convenient and nearer to our hand. And then see how countries, which once could not be reached, have been opened to us. The Celestial King of China, the rebel prince, invites us to come and preach. He does not merely permit — he invites, he builds places of worship, he is prepared, he says, that his brethren should come and teach him, and teach all his subjects, for they are imperfectly taught in the things of God. And the Imperial Sovereign of China, too, though he does not invite, permits the missionaries to go among his millions. There is perfect liberty for us to preach to four hundred millions of persons who before had never seen the light of Calvary. And there is India, too, given up to our dominion, and the old Company, which always impeded us, rolled up in its shroud and laid in its grave. And there are other lands and other places which once seemed to be environed by impassable mountains, into which we have now a road. Oh, for the will to dash through that road riding upon the white horses of salvation! Oh, for the heart, the spirit, and the soul to avail ourselves of the golden opportunity, and to preach Christ where he has never been preached before! All power, then, we can clearly see, over everything in this world has been given to Christ, and has been used for the propagation of his truth.

But, brethren, let us recollect that power is given to Christ in heaven as well as on earth. All angels bow before him, and the cherubim and seraphim are ready to obey his high behests. Power is given to him over the plenitude of the Holy Spirit; he can pour out the mysterious energy in such abundance that nations can be born in a day. He can clothe his ministers with salvation, and make his priests shout aloud for joy. He has

power to intercede with God, and he shall presently send out men to preach, presently give the people the mind to hear, and give the hearers the will to obey. We have in the midst of us to-day our Leader. He is not gone from us. If his flesh and blood be absent yet in body as well as spirit he still lives, adorned with the dew and beauty of his youth. As for the Mahomedan, *his* leader has long ago rotted in his coffin; but our's lives, and because he lives, his truth and his cause live also. We have with us to-day a Leader whose power is not diminished, whose influence in the highest heavens has suffered no impairing. He is universal Lord. Oh, let our efforts be worthy of the power which he has promised, let our zeal be in some respect akin to his zeal, and let our energy prove that the energy divine has not been withdrawn.

I wish that I could preach this morning, but the more earnestly I feel, the more scant are my words with which to express my emotions. I have prayed to God, and it is a prayer I shall repeat till I die — I have prayed that out of this Church there may go many missionaries. I will never be content with a congregation, or with a Church, or even with ministers, many of whom have already gone out of our midst. We must have missionaries from this Church. God's people everywhere will I trust aid me in training young soldiers for my Master's army. God will send the men, and faith will find the means, and we will ourselves send out our own men to proclaim the name of Jesus. Brethren, it is a singular thing, there are some young men who get the idea into their minds that they would like to go into foreign lands, but these are frequently the most unfit men, and have not the power and ability. Now, I would that the divine call would come to some gifted men. You who have, perhaps, some wealth of your own, what could be a better object in life than to devote yourself and your substance to the Redeemer's cause? You young men, who have brilliant prospects before

you, but who as yet have not the anxieties of a family to maintain, why, would it not be noble thing to surrender your brilliant prospects, that you may become a humble preacher of Christ? The greater the sacrifice, the more honor to yourself and the more acceptable to him. I have questioned my own conscience, and I do not think I could be in the path of duty if I should go abroad to preach the Word, leaving this field of labor; but I think many of my brethren now laboring at home might with the greatest advantage surrender their charges, and leave a land where they would scarce be missed, to go where their presence would be as valuable as the presence of a thousand such as they are here. And oh! I long that we may see young men out of the universities, and students in our grammar schools — that we may see our physicians, advocates, tradesmen, and educated mechanics, when God has touched their hearts, giving up all they have, that they may teach and preach Christ. We want Vanderkists; we want Judsons and Brainerds over again. It will never do to send out to the heathen men who are of no use at home. We cannot send men of third and tenth class abilities; we must send the highest, and best. The bravest men must lead the van. O God, anoint thy servants, we beseech thee; put the fire into their hearts that never can be quenched; make it so hot within their bones that they must die or preach, that they must be down with broken hearts, or else be free to preach where Christ was never heard. Brethren, envy any one among you — I say again with truth, I envy you — if it shall be your lot to go to China, the country so lately opened to us. I would gladly change places with you. I would renounce the partial case of a settlement in this country, and renounce the responsibilities of so large a congregation as this with pleasure, if I might have your honors. I think sometimes that missionaries in the field — if it be right to compare great things with such small ones — might say to you, as our English king

did to his soldiers at the battle of Agincourt, changing the word for a moment —

“Ministers in England, now a bed,
Might think themselves accurs’d they were not here,
And hold their manhood’s cheap while any speak
Who fought with us upon this glorious day.”

Have we none out of our sixteen hundred members — have we none out of this congregation of six thousand — who can say, “Here am I, send me? “Jesus! is there not one? Must heathens perish? Must the gods of the heathen hold their thrones? Must thy kingdom fail? Are there none to own thee, none to maintain thy righteous cause? If there be none, let us weep, each one of us, because such a calamity has fallen on us. But if there be any who are willing to give all for Christ, let us who are compelled to stay at home do our best to help them. Let us see to it that they lack nothing, for we cannot send them out without purse or scrip. Let us fill the purse of the men whose hearts God has filled, and take care of them temporally, leaving it for God to preserve them spiritually.

May the Lord, the Divine Master add his blessing to the feeble words that I have uttered, and let me not conclude till I have said, *I* must teach *you* too, and this is the teaching of God — “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” Trust him with your soul, and he will save you. For “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned.”

384 FULL ASSURANCE – PS. 35:3

A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Morning, April 28th, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.” — Psalm 35:3

THE PSALMIST, when he wrote these words, was surrounded by many and furious enemies. He pleads with God to take hold on shield and buckler, and to come forth for his defense. Yet he feels that there is only one thing which God hath need to do in order to remove his fears, and make him strong in the day of conflict, “Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation,” and I will defy them all. In the name of God, I will set up my banner; and though weak in myself, yet shall I be able to overcome them readily, and tread them as straw is trodden from the dunghill, when the joy of the Lord shall be my strength, because thou hast said unto me, “I am thy salvation.” Brethren, there is nothing that can make you strong to labor for God, bold to fight against your enemies, and mighty to resist your temptations, like a full assurance that God is your God, and your sure salvation. Your doubts and fears weaken you. While they nourish your despair, and diminish your joy, they do at the same time cut the sinews of your valor, and blunt the edge of your sword. A fully-assured Christian is a very giant in our Israel; for happiness and beauty he standeth like Saul, head and shoulders taller than the rest; while for strength and

courage he can match with David, and is like the angel of the Lord.

It is upon the subject of full assurance that I shall address you this morning, without further preface I shall first bid you *hear objectors*, who oppose themselves to full assurance; secondly, I shall beg you to *hear the test*; and then I shall request you to *hear the preacher*.

I. First of all, let us HEAR OBJECTORS.

There are some who say, it is better that a man should stand in jeopardy of his soul every hour — better for him to be exercised with doubts and fears, than that he should grow confident, and have the joy of knowing assuredly that he is a saved man, is in the favor of God, and shall never be condemned. We will hear these objectors for a moment, and answer them speedily.

One of them advances, and he says, “First, I object to your preaching this morning, the doctrine of full assurance, *because I believe it to be impossible: I cannot conceive that any man can know in this life, whether he shall be saved in the life to come. Perhaps I may grant you that, in the dying hour, some men may get a little confidence; but, with the perception of a few of the eminently holy, and the profoundly spiritual, it cannot be possible that Christians should attain to a full confidence, and an infallible assurance of being saved.*” To this, sir, I reply thus. You say it is impossible: I say it is not only possible, but has been certainly enjoyed by the people of God. Doth the Spirit of God teach men to pray impossibilities? Yet David prays for it here: “Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.” The thing is possible, then, or else David would not have asked for it, it *can* be granted by God, it *can* be received by the Christian, else this prayer had never been put in inspired record. Besides, do you think that the Holy Ghost would exhort us to do an impossibility? And yet, does he not speak by the mouth of Paul and say, “Give diligence to make your calling and election *sure*?” “Does he not

bid us be assured that we are called by grace, and that we are chosen of God? I say, that which *may* be a master of prayer, and which is a subject of precept, cannot be an impossible thing. Besides, it has been enjoyed by tens of thousands of even ordinary every-day Christians. We could read you their biographies, and find expressions like this: “I have no more doubt of my interest in Christ than I have of my existence.” “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him.” And there be many in this house to-day, who if this were the time for them to give their personal testimony, could say, “I *know* that I have been born again; I *am sure* that my sins are all forgiven. I am neither afraid to die, nor do I fear to live; for, living, Christ is with me, and dying, I shall be with Christ; being justified, I have peace with God through Jesus Christ my Lord.” Brethren, it is not impossible; it is attainable by the man who hath faith, if he know how to use the proper means.

But shall I tell you who the gentlemen are who generally raise objections to the glorious privilege of assurance? There are, first of all, the adherents of the Pope of Rome. Of course, the Papist does not like full assurance. And why? The Pope and his priest would have a lean larder if full assurance were well preached. Only conceive my brethren, if the Roman Catholic could get the lull assurance of salvation, surely the Cardinals would hardly find money enough to buy their red hats. For where were purgatory then? Purgatory is an impossibility, if full assurance be possible. If a man knows himself to be saved, then he is not to be troubled with a silly fear about waiting in the intermediate state, to be purified with fire, before he can enter into heaven. Purgatory is only acceptable to those poor trembling souls who know of no sure salvation here, and are glad of this deceptive hope of a salvation to be wrought in the world to come. Purgatory being thus builded upon a lying

imposition — on the fears of ignorant consciences, becomes what brave old Hugh Latimer used to call it, “Purgatory Pick-purse,” to the poor sinner, and Purgatory Fill-purse to the vagabond priest. Once let full assurance be given to all Christian men — first make the Romanist a Christian, and then let him be fully assured of his interest in Christ, and away goes purgatory, and there will never be a soul found to tremble at it any more.

The other persons who object to this doctrine, are generally people who have no religion, and who want, therefore, to make themselves a little easy by the notion that nobody has any more than they have. Your easy church-goers and chapel-goers; your ladies and gentlemen who think that religion consists in buying a Prayer Book, who imagine that to have a book of Psalms and Hymns, constitutes godliness; your fine folks to whom religion is as much a matter of fashion as some new color, or some new form of dress; — these people, having no vitality in their godliness, never having a religion which could either make them cry or sing, never having godliness enough either to make them miserable, or make them blessed — these think there is nothing more in godliness than they get themselves. They say, “*I never knew my sins were forgiven,*” and judging all others by themselves, they think that no one else can know it. And I am sorry to say, grieved at heart to say it, but seldom I have known professed ministers of the gospel, who have even rebuked those who have reached to the high attainment of assurance. I was waited upon, not very long since, by a lady of considerable standing, who had long been seeking rest, and nothing would satisfy her, unless she knew her sins were forgiven. She had called upon a clergyman, of some standing too, and he had assured her that the thing was utterly impossible; and she was ready to go mad with the idea that she must all her life go mourning on somewhere between hope and

fear, in the balances between despair and hope. When I told her that it was not only the privilege of the Christian, but his duty, to *know* himself to be saved, and that no man ought to rest till he was infallibly assured by the Holy Ghost that he was in a gracious state and delivered from fear of hell, the joy that flushed her face was something worth beholding, and she went on her way to seek, and I trust to find the grace which is in Christ Jesus. I would have each of you put aside those carnal quibbles which are raised by Romanists and Romanizers, against the idea that we can know that we are saved, for not only can we know it, but we ought never to be satisfied till we do know it. And this, mark you, is not *my* statement; it is the manifest testimony of the Book of God, and was plainly held by all the fathers of the Church, Augustine, Chrysostom, and the like; it is the testimony of all the Reformers — of all the giant divines of the Puritanic times, it is the testimony of all truly evangelical Christians, that every Christian has a right to have a full assurance of his salvation, and should never be content until he attains thereunto.

But another objector rises and faintly says, *“But I am afraid, sir; I am afraid of your preaching full assurance, because so many persons have boasted of it, and they have been vile pretenders, and have perished after all.”* Friend, it is to be admitted that there have been many who have mistaken presumption for assurance. They have thought that the arrogant impertinence of a proud unhumiliated spirit was the same thing as the simple child-like confidence of a renewed, regenerated heart. But mark, assurance is not possible to you, till you are born again; you have no business to dream of it, till you have a new heart and a right spirit. It would indeed be a fearful piece of blasphemy for you to think that God is your Father when your Father he is not, or to dream that your sins are forgiven when your hands are scarlet with

them, and your soul is black with your crimes. But because some make the counterfeit, am I to throw away the genuine?

Because, forsooth, there be some tin shillings, will you all cast away the silver? Because some pass upon you the base forged bank-note, will you therefore burn those which really come from the bank? I trow not. And, my dear brethren, if thousands presumed, that would not be an argument why one true Christian should not be fully assured of his interest in Christ.

“Yes, *but*,” says another, “*I am afraid, if men get fully assured, they will grow careless.*” This is the old objection that was brought against faith in Luther’s time. “If men believe that they will be justified by faith,” said the Romanist, “they will never do any good works;” whereas the fact is, men never do any good works till they are justified by faith. Those who cry down good works as the ground of hope, are the very men who work with all their might in the service of Christ, and as assurance is but faith come to perfection, the assured man will always be the most industrious man. Why, when I know that I am saved,

“Then for the love I bear his name,
What was my gain I count my loss;
I pour contempt on all my shame,
And nail my glory to his cross.”

A well-grounded assurance is the most active worker in the field, the most valiant warrior in the battle, and the most patient sufferer in the furnace.

There are none so active as the assured. Let a tree be planted in this soil, and watered with this river, and its boughs will bend with fruit. Confidence of success stimulates exertion, joy in faith removes sorrows, and realizing assurance overcomes all difficulties. Like the sword of Goliath, we may

say of assurance, “There is none like it; give it me.” Who cares for deaths, or devils, when he can read his title clear? What matters the tempest without when there is calm within? Assurance puts the heart in heaven, and moves the feet to heaven. Its children are all fair, like the holy children in Babylon, and no race can compare for a moment with these “hinds let loose,” these “lion-like men,” these children of the sun. There never were men so self-sacrificing, so daring, so zealous, so enthusiastic in the cause of Christ, as the men who know that their names were written in the Lamb’s Book of Life, and therefore out of gratitude serve their God. Why, I put it to the sinner here, who never thought of this matter before? “Poor man! if your sins could be all forgiven this morning, and you could know it — if God should say to your soul, “I am thy salvation,” and if you could go out of this house knowing that you were a child of God, do you think it would make you unholy? Do you think it would make you negligent? No, I think I see the tear in your eye, as you reply, “I would do anything for *him*; I would *live* for him; I would *die* for him, to show how I love him who loved me.” Ah! poor soul, if thou believest in Christ *now*, that will be true. If thou wilt cast thyself on Jesus now, thou shalt be forgiven; there shall be no sin left in God’s book against thee; thou shalt be absolved, acquitted, delivered, cleansed and washed; and then thou shalt prove in thy experience that assurance does not make men sin, but that assurance of pardon is the very best means of making men holy, and keeping them in the fear of God.

I have one class of objectors to answer, and I have done. There is a certain breed of Calvinists, whom I do not envy, who are always jeering and sneering as much as ever they can at the full assurance of faith. I have seen their long laces. I have heard their whining periods, and read their dismal sentences in which they say something to this effect — “Groan in the Lord always,

and again I say, groan! He that mourneth and weepeth, he that doubteth and feareth, he that distrusteth and dishonoureth his God, shall be saved.” That seems to be the sum and substance of their very ungospel-like gospel. But why is it that they do this? I speak now honestly and fearlessly. It is because there is a pride within them — a conceit which is fed on rottenness, and sucks marrow and fatness out of putrid carcasses. And what, say you, is the object of their pride? Why, the pride of being able to boast of a deep experience — the pride of being a blacker, grosser and more detestable backslider than other people. “Whose glory is in their shame,” may well apply to them. A more dangerous, because a more deceitful pride than this is not to be found. It has all the elements of self-righteousness in it. I would sooner a man boast in his good works than boast in his good feelings, because you *can* deal with the man who boasts in his good works, you have plain texts of Scripture, and you convict him of being a legalist but this other man boasts that he is no legalist he can speak very sharply against legality, he knows the truth, and yet the truth is not in him, in its spirit because still he is looking to his feelings, and not looking to the finished work of Christ. Of all the Diabolians that ever stole into the city of Mansoul, Mr. Live-by-feeling was one of the worst of villains, though he had the fairest face. Brethren, you had better live by works than live by feelings, both are damning forms of trust, but the one is more deceptive and more delusive than the other by far. You are justified by faith, not by feelings, you are saved by what Christ felt for you, not by what you feel, and the root and basis of salvation is the cross, and “other foundation shall no man lay than that which is laid,” even though he place his experience there, he builds “wood, hay, and stubble,” and not the corner stone, which is Christ Jesus the Lord.

I have thus tried to meet my objectors: I shall now turn to the second part of the discourse briefly.

II. Let us **HEAR THE TEXT**. “Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.

The first thing the text seems to say is, *David had his doubts, then*; for why would he pray, “Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation,” if he were not sometimes exercised with doubts and fears? Cheer up, Christian brother! If David doubted thou must not say, “I am no Christian, because I have doubts.” The best of believers *sometimes* are troubled with fears and anxieties. Abraham had the greatest faith, but he had *some* unbelief. I envy the brother who can say that his faith never wavered. He can say more than David did, for David had cause to cry, “Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.”

But, next, the text says that *David was not content while he had doubts and fears* but he repaired at once to the mercy-seat to pray for assurance, for he valued it as much fine gold. “O Lord!” David seems to say, “I have lost my confidence; my foot slippeth; my feet are almost gone; my doubts and fears prevail, but I cannot bear it. I am wretched, I am unhappy. “Say – say unto my soul, I *am* thy salvation.””

And then the text tells you yet a third thing — that David *knew where to obtain full assurance*. He goes at once to God in prayer. He knows that knee-work is that by which faith is increased, and there, in his closet, he crieth out to the Most High, “Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.” O my brethren, we must be much alone with God, if we would have a clear sense of his love! Let your cries cease, and your eyes will grow dim. Much in prayer, much in heaven; slow in prayer, slow in progress.

Now pull the text into pieces, and let us look at the words. And notice, that David would not be satisfied unless his assurance had a *divine source*. “*Say* unto my soul.” Great God! if

the priest should say it, it is nothing, if my minister should say it if the deacons, the Church officers, and all the members of the Church should say it, it is nothing. Lord, do *thou* say it!

Nothing short of a divine testimony in the soul will ever content the true Christian. The Spirit of God must himself after a supernatural sort, speak to our conscience and to our heart, or else peaceful; and quiet our spirit can never be. Gracious God! let me not take my hopes at hap-hazard; let not my confidence be ill-founded and built upon the sand. Speak thyself, with thy word of truth and wisdom, and say to me, even to me, “I am thy salvation!”

Note, next, David cannot be content unless his assurance has a *vivid personality* about it. “Say unto my soul, I am *thy* salvation.” If thou shouldst say this to all the saints, it were nothing, unless thou shouldst say it to me. Lord, I have sinned I deserve it not; I am sinful; I scarcely dare to ask it; but oh! say it to my soul even to *my* soul, “I am *thy* salvation.” Let me have a pointed, personal, infallible, indisputable sense that I am thine, and that thou art mine.

See, next, David must have it come deep into *his inner being*. “Say unto my *soul*. Speak it not merely to my ears; say it to my soul. Great God! let me not fancy that I heard it in the air; let me not dream that I listened to it in my sleep, but speak it right into the ears of my spirit, and let the inner man hear the echoes of thy peace-speaking voice, — ‘Say unto my *soul*, I am thy salvation.’” Brethren, it is no skimming the surface which will do for us; we must have quiet in the deeps. That blessing “of the depth which lieth under” we need and must have. It will not content us to have a fair skin, scarce concealing with its deceitful gauze the foul and deadly leprosy. Our soul must be sound and healthy to the very core Lord, say to my soul, in my bowels’ inner depths, “I am thy salvation.” Put it beyond doubt; put it beyond all chance, dispute, or hazard, “I *am* thy salvation.”

Note again, David wants present assurance. He does not say, “Say unto my soul, I will be thy salvation,” but, “I am.” And yet that “am,” as you will see it you look at the text, is not in the original, it is in italics; it has been supplied by our translators. That word “am” is man’s word, not God’s; therefore, I will say but little of it. It may be, “I *will* be thy salvation,” or “I *have been* thy salvation,” or “I *am*,” and very rightly there is no word there at all. You can learn as much from God’s silence as you can from his speech, and I think this silence means just this. There is no word put there at all, because full assurance enables the Christian to say of God, “He *was* my salvation before the worlds began, he is my salvation now, he *will* be when the world shall pass away.” So that you may put up the prayer in any tense you prefer. “Say unto my soul, I — thy salvation,” The two terms shall be alike. “God — the salvation” — “I,” the great personal self-existent Deity, “thy salvation.” The two shall stand and fall together; they shall both of them be sure, both eternal in the ancient ages, both everlasting in the ages to come. “Say unto my soul, I, thy salvation.”

I think we have thus heard what the text has to say to us. You will remark, when you look it all the way through, that the only question which we need put is this: How *can* God say to us, “I am thy salvation?” You do not expect to hear it as you walk along the streets, you do not imagine that you will see it written on the skies? No, God speaketh to his people thus: by his Word, by his ministers, and by his Holy Spirit silently and mysteriously imprinting upon the heart the fact, that that heart is washed in the Redeemer’s blood. Dr. Caesar Malan, of Geneva, has put in a very plain light the way in which God in his Word says to us, “I am thy salvation.” You are to suppose the minister is talking to a friend; this friend is anxious and

doubting, and wants to know how the Bible can say to any man, that that man is saved. The conversation runs thus: —

“*Pastor.* He who believes in Jesus Christ, has eternal life. John 3:36. Do you know this declaration of the word of God? Very well, but you appear to think it obscure or equivocal. *John.* Never, I am sure it is true. Yet all those who say — I believe in Jesus Christ, are not the elected of God, bought of the Lord, or saved by grace. All these are not chosen, for there are many hypocrites who dare say that they believe in the Son of God.

Pastor. You observe, that the word does not say, that those who *say* they believe, or *pretend* to believe, in Jesus Christ, or who imagine falsely that they believe, have eternal life; but this infallible word says, that those who believe in effect and really, have this life; so, then, the multitude in Christian nations who profess to believe in Jesus Christ, is not proof that they believe in effect; but if this multitude believe in effect on the Savior, certainly they will have eternal life. *John.* Thus, then, sir, whoever is able to assure himself that he believes on the Savior, then he will be certain that he has actually the life eternal, and that he is also elected. — (*The minister took a little bit of paper and wrote upon it these words.*) Whoever receives from my hand this paper, and this declaration, I hold him for my friend: (*he put his name to these words, and presenting it to John, he said to him.*) Receive this from my hand, and believe my testimony, for I am a creditable person: — (*John took the paper and read what the minister had written.*) *Pastor.* How am I to regard you, John, after this testimony that I have given you? *John.* I have the minister for a friend. *Pastor.* Is it from you to me that this friendship flows, or is it from me to you? *John.* It is from you to me. *Pastor.* Do you hesitate to say that I am your friend, and that you have become mine? *John.* If I said I did not believe you, I should make you a liar. *Pastor.* Do you, then, look with affection towards me, or is it I with affection towards you? for you are assured that I am

your friend, and that I regard you as mine. *John*. You, dear sir, love me, and care for me. *Pastor*.

And how are you assured that this good-will is addressed to you! *John*. Because you have been pleased to say it, and I do not doubt your veracity. *Pastor*. I am sure that I have not written your name, as my friend; why then do you know that I have mentioned you in particular? *John*. You have written with your own hand, that whoever receiveth this paper, you shall have him for a friend; and because I have received this paper, and because I know that you are of good authority, I have no doubt at all upon the subject. *Pastor*. That is, then, because you have been certain on the one hand of having received this paper from my hand, and on the other hand, that I am of good authority, that you are certain of possessing, at the present, my affection, *John*. I do not think that I am able to speak with doubt upon this point, without insulting your veracity."

The substance of which is just this, that when you can take the Word, and find that you *are* the character there spoken of, it is as good as if out of heaven an angel should fly down to you, sitting in your pew now, and should say in your ear, in the presence of this congregation, "God is thy salvation." Now, brethren, I know this day I have no other trust but in the cross of Christ; therefore I am saved; and you can say the same, each one of you, if you are resting in Christ alone. There is not an "if" or a "but" about it; you are saved. Oh! do enjoy that thought, and go home and live upon it; it shall be marrow and fatness to your spirit.

But, then, God often speaks by his minister, as well as by his Word. But that is very much in the same way. While the minister is preaching concerning those who are saved, you listen, and you say, "Ah, he speaks to me!" He describes your character, and though you are standing far away in the gallery, you say, "Ah, that is my character!" He speaks of the weary and

heavy-laden sinner and he bids him come, and you say, “Ah, I am weary and heavy laden, and I will come, “and when you have come, Christ has given you rest. You need have no doubt about it; if you can fairly take hold on the promise which is offered to certain characters and states, why, then you can go your way saying, “God hath said to me by his servant, ‘*I am thy salvation.*’”

Besides this, God has a way of speaking, without the Word and without the ministers, to our hearts. His Spirit can drop like the rain, and distil like the dew as the small rain upon the tender herb. We know not how it is, but sometimes there is a deep sweet calm. Our conscience says, “I have been washed in the blood of Christ,” and the Spirit of God saith, “Ay, ’tis true, ’tis true.” In such times, we are so happy — so happy that we want to tell our joys — so blessed, that if we could but borrow angels’ wings and fly away, we would scarce know the change when we passed through the pearly gates, for we have had heaven below, and there has been but little difference between that and heaven above. Oh, I wish my whole congregation without exception, consisted of men and women who had heard the Spirit say, “I am thy salvation.” What happy hymns! What happy prayers! You might go home to some poor single room, you might go to a scantily furnished house, and to a table that has barely bread upon it, but happy men! happy men! Better would be your dinner of herbs, than a stalled ox without confidence in Christ; better your rich poverty, than the poverty of the rich who have no faith in Jesus; better all the griefs you have to endure, when sanctified by assurance, than all the joys the worldling has, when unblessed by faith, and unhallowed by love to God. *I can say now, —*

“Grant me the visits of thy face,

And I desire no more.”

I shall now pass to my third and last point — a little while only, but earnestly, I trust.

III. Will you patiently **HEAR THE PREACHER**, in what he has to say?

I know that in this large assembly, I am addressing very many who never knew that they were saved. I must put you all into one class, though, indeed, you are not in the same state; for there are some who never *knew* that they were saved, who are saved. They do believe in Jesus; but their faith is so little, that they never know that they are forgiven. I have to put *you* in the class, because you do belong to it for the time being. But there are many of you who never knew that you were saved, because you never cared to know. It has been a matter of concern with you to find out your pedigree; but you never asked, “Is God my Father?” You have made quite sure of the title deeds of your estate; but you never took the trouble to ask whether heaven was yours or not. And possibly, some of you have imbibed a notion that it is a very easy thing to be saved — that there is no need to trouble your heads about it much — that so long as you do your duty, attend your church or frequent your chapel, it is well and good, and there is no use making this fuss about being born again, and having a new heart, and a right spirit. I may never have your ear again, but mark this at the day of judgment, I will be quit of your blood if you perish in your delusion.

This is *the* delusion of England. We have not half so much to dread Popery as we have that nominal Christianity, fostered by a national Church — that nominal Christianity which has no root nor soul within it. Oh! there are millions of Englishmen who think they are Christians, because they were sprinkled in infancy with holy drops, and because they have come to the

Lord's Table, whereas, little do they know that every time they have come there, they did eat and drink damnation to themselves, because they did not discern the Lord's body. This is the curse and plague of England, that we have so much profession and so little possession — such multitudes of you who are content to sit under a sleepy ministry where ministers will not tell you the truth for fear of hurting your feelings, where they will preach the truth generally, as if a man should waive a sword, but do not come home personally, as if a man should drive it through your very heart. What we want is more home dealing, more plain speaking, more thrusting of the hand inside your soul, to make you tremble, and ask yourselves the question whether you be right before God or no.

I speak then, to the whole of you who never knew that you were saved; and first I say to you *how foolish you are!* O sirs! you are to die soon, and you are to go to heaven or to hell, — to splendours and glories, or to glooms and horrors, and yet you do not know which is to be your portion. O fools! miserable fools! If some of you should say, "I do not know whether I have a cancer or no," I should say, seek the physician, and enquire if there be a fear but to say, "I do not know whether I am in the bonds of iniquity and the call of bitterness or no," is awful indeed. Why, you make your estates as tight as law can tie them; all the skill of legal language is employed to make the deed secure, and yet you are content to have heaven as a thing of *if*, and *but*, and *perhaps*. Oh! fools indeed! How can ye be so mad? Sure to die, and yet not sure whether you are saved!

Sure to appear before the bar of God, and yet not know whether you shall be acquitted or condemned? Oh! if there be wisdom left within you, if your brain be not turned to perfect madness I conjure you by the living God to make sure work of it, and never be content till you *know* that you are saved.

But again: I must not only call you foolish, but miserable. Miserable, I say. Do you look at me and say, “We are comfortable, we are easy, we are content?” “Ay, sirs, so madmen talk. If I saw a man lying down upon the brink of the crater of a volcano, and I knew that very soon the lava would come streaming up, and then rolling down, I could not call him happy, though he were toying with Nature’s fairest flowers, or sucking her most delicious sweets. And you — you are in such a state as this! Upon a puff of wind, a bubble, hangs your eternal state. If life depended on a hair, it were indeed precarious; but here is your soul depending on your life, which depends on something frailer than a dream. O sirs! you may drop dead in this house. Such things are not extraordinary. Men have come into the house of God bodies, and they have gone out corpses. And while I think that any one of you may die, and you are uncertain whether you shall be lost or saved I could sooner call you kings than call you happy, and the rightest title I can give to you is, O miserable men! miserable men! uncertain as to your future state.

Once more, and let this last thought ring in your ears. Ah! you may go away, perhaps to your gay parties, to your rounds of merriment, to your midnight balls, to your varnished harlotries, mayhap, but let this ring in your ears, “Oh! the danger — the danger of not knowing whether you shall be saved or lost!” You will die I suppose you will not dispute with me about that. You do not claim to be immortal; you expect to die. You die; and what, sirs; — what, madam; — what is your fears should be true?

Your companions are gay no longer; they are the damned spirits of hell; your occupations are frivolous no more; they are solemn and serious now — as solemn as death, and as serious as eternity. Where now the music which once regaled our dainty ears? Your only symphonies are sighs, dirges, and howlings.

Where now the soft couch on which you took your rest and pleasure? You have made your bed in hell; and what a change for some of you — from the scarlet of Dives to the flames of hell — from the feasts so sumptuous to the fiends so terrible! Where are ye now, ye church- goers, ye chapel-goers? You have no profession of religion here, no hymn- books here; no minister of mercy; no voice of holy song; no ring of Sabbath bells; no tearful eye; no tender heart; no lip which trembles while it speaks to you, and only speaks of terror because it loves you, and would save you if it could. O my hearers, if you are not sure of being saved, what if you are sure of being damned! And you are either — mark this — not to your own apprehension perhaps but in fact; you are sure of one or the other. Which is it? Which must it be? I know, when I preach these terrible things, men will not listen to me. But God is my witness, I would not speak about them if I *dare* be silent about them. But if you perish, sirs, it shall not be for want of pleading with, or praying for, or weeping over. Sinner! I beseech thee turn! By him that died, and lives, and hath sent me to plead with thee, I beseech thee, seek, if thou hast never sought, and if thou hast sought, seek again, and if thou hast found, find yet more fully, till thou canst say, “He *is* mine, and I am his.” Put your downy pillow under your head to-night, ye sluggards: but sleep not, for ye may never wake in this world. Sit to your luxurious meal to-morrow: let the dainties be sweet, leave them untasted, for you may one day be denied a drop of water. O sirs! be not happy till you have made your happiness sure. Oh! have no peace, till your peace is everlasting, substantial peace. Talk not of being blessed, till God has blessed you. Think not that you be blessed, while “God is angry with the wicked every day,” and hath said, “Cursed is he that is under the law.”

But do you wish to be saved? Does the Spirit of God whisper to you “Escape! escape!” There is forgiveness still;

there is forgiveness now; there is forgiveness for *thee*. Trust Christ sinner, and you shall be saved — saved this moment. Believe in him now with all your guilt and sin about you. May the Holy Ghost now lead you to trust my Lord and Master; and you may go home assured that *he* hath for ever put away your sin, and you are accepted and blessed in him. May God bless you, each one of you, now and ever. Amen.

“Surrounded by a host of foes,
Storm'd by a host of foes within,
Nor swift to flee, nor strong to oppose,
Single against hell, earth, and sin;

Single, yet undismay'd, I am;
I dare believe in Jesu's name.
What though a thousand hosts engage.
A thousand worlds my soul to shakes

I have a shield shall quell their rage,
And drive the alien armies back;
Portray'd it bears a bleeding Lamb;
I dare believe in Jesu's name.”

385 EXPOSITIONS OF THE DOCTRINE OF GRACE

Thursday, April 11th, 1861,
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

The Rev. C. H. Spurgeon took the chair at 3 o'clock.

The proceedings were commenced by singing the 21st
Hymn —

Saved from the damning power of sin,
The law's tremendous curse,
We'll now the sacred song begin
Where God began with us.

We'll sing the vast unmeasured grace
Which, from the days of old,
Did all his chosen sons embrace,
As sheep within his fold.

The basis of eternal love
Shall mercy's frame sustain;
Earth, hell, or sin, the same to move
Shall all conspire in vain.

Sing, O ye sinners bought with blood
Hail the Great Three in One;
Tell how secure the cov'nant stood
Ere time its race begun.

Ne'er had ye felt the guilt of sin,
Nor sweets of pard'ning love,
Unless your worthless names had been
Enroll'd to life above.

O what a sweet exalted song
Shall rend the vaulted skies,
When, shouting grace, the blood-wash'd throng
Shall see the Top Stone rise.

The Rev. GEORGE WYARD, of Deptford, offered prayer.

The Rev. C. H. SPURGEON in opening the proceedings said, we have met together beneath this roof already to set forth most of those truths in which consists the peculiarity of this Church. Last evening, we endeavored to show to the world, that we heartily recognised the essential union of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. And now, this afternoon and evening, it is our intention, through the lips of our brethren, to set forth those things which are verily received among us, and especially those great points which have been so often attacked but which are still upheld and maintained, — truths which we have proved in our experience to be full of grace and truth. My only business upon this occasion is to introduce the brethren who shall address you, and I shall do so as briefly as possible, making what I shall say a preface to their remarks.

The controversy which has been carried on between the Calvinist and the Arminian is exceedingly important, but it does not so involve the vital point of personal godliness as to make eternal life depend upon our holding either system at theology. Between the Protestant and the Papist there is a controversy of such a character, that he who is saved on the one side by faith

in Jesus, dare not amour that his opponent on the opposite side can be saved while depending on his own works. There the controversy is for life or death, because it hinges mainly upon the doctrine of justification by faith, which Luther so properly called the test doctrine, by which a Church either stands or falls. The controversy again between the believer in Christ and the Socinian, is one which affects a vital point. If the Socinian be right, we are most frightfully in error; we are, in fact, idolaters, and how dwelleth eternal life in us? and if we be right, our largest charity will not permit us to imagine that a man can enter heaven who does not believe the real divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are other controversies which thus cut at the very core, and touch the very essence of the whole subject. But, I think we are all free to admit, that while John Wesley, for instance, in modern times zealously defended Arminianism, and on the other hand, George Whitfield with equal fervor fought for Calvinism, we should not be prepared either of us, on either side of the question, to deny the vital godliness of either the one or the other. We cannot shut our eyes to what we believe to be the cross mistakes of our opponents, and should think ourselves unworthy of the name of honest men, if we could admit that they are right in all things and ourselves right too. An honest man has an intellect which does not permit him to believe that “yes” and “no” can both subsist at the same hour and both be true. I cannot say, “It is,” and my brother point blank say, “It is not,” and yet both of us be right on that point. We are willing to admit, in fact, we dare not do otherwise, that opinion upon this controversy does not determine the future or even the present state of any man; but still, we think it to be so important, that in maintaining our views, we advance with all courage and fervency of spirit believing that we are doing God’s work and upholding most important truth. It may happen this afternoon that the term “Calvinism” may be

frequently used. Let it not be misunderstood, we only use the term for shortness. That doctrine which is called “Calvinism” did not spring from Calvin; we believe that it sprang from the great founder of all truth.

Perhaps Calvin himself derived it mainly from the writings of Augustine. Augustine obtained his views, without doubt, through the Spirit of God, from the diligent study of the writings of Paul, and Paul received them of the Holy Ghost, from Jesus Christ the great founder of the Christian dispensation. We use the term then, not because we impute any extraordinary importance to Calvin's having taught these doctrines. We would be just as willing to call them by any other name, if we could find one which would be better understood, and which on the whole would be as consistent with fact. And then again, this afternoon, we shall have very likely to speak of Arminians, and by that, we would not for a moment insinuate that all who are in membership with the Arminian body, hold those particular views. There are Calvinists in connection with Calvinistic Churches, who are not Calvinistic, bearing the name but discarding the system. There are, on the other hand, not a few in the Methodist Churches who, in most points perfectly agree with us, and I believe that if the matter came to be thoroughly sifted, it would be found that we are more agreed in our private opinions than in our public confessions, and our devotional religion is more uniform than our theology. For instance, Mr. Wesley's hymn-book, which may be looked upon as being the standard of his divinity, has in it upon some topics higher Calvinism than many books used by ourselves. I have been exceedingly struck with the very forcible expressions there used, some of which I might have hesitated to employ myself I shall ask your attention while I quote verses from the hymns of Mr. Wesley, which we can all endorse as fully and plainly in harmony with the doctrines of grace, far more so than

the preaching of some modern Calvinists. I do this because our low-doctrine Baptists and Morisonians ought to be aware of the vast difference between themselves and the Evangelical Arminians.

HYMN 131, VERSES 1, 2, 3.

“Lord, I despair myself to heal:
I see my sin, but cannot feel;
I cannot, till thy Spirit blow,
And bid the obedient waters flux.

’Tis thine a heart of flesh to give;
Thy gifts I only can receive:
Here, then, to thee I all resign;
To draw, redeem, and seal, — is thine.

With simple faith on thee I call,
My Light, my Life, my Lord, my all:
I wait the moving of the pool;
I wait the word that speaks me whole.”

HYMN 133, VERSE 4.

“Thy golden scepter from above
Reach forth; lo! my whole heart I bow,
Say to my soul, ‘Thou art my love;
My chosen ‘midst ten thousand, thou.’”

This is very like election.

HYMN 136, VERSES 8, 9, 10.

“I cannot rest, till in thy blood
I full redemption have:
But thou, through whom I come to God,
Canst to the utmost save.

From sin, the guilt, the power, the pain,
Thou wilt redeem my soul:
Lord, I believe, and not in vain;
My faith shall make me whole.

I too, with thee, shall walk in white;
With all thy saints shall prove,
What is the length, and breadth, and height,
And depth of perfect love.”

Brethren, is not this somewhat like final perseverance? and what is meant by the next quotation, if the people of God can perish after all?

HYMN 138, VERSES 6, 7.

“Who, who shall in thy presence stand
And match Omnipotence?
Ungrasp the hold of thy right hand,
Or pluck the sinner thence?

Sworn to destroy, let earth assail;
Nearer to save thou art:
Stronger than all the powers of hell,
And greater than my heart.”

The following is remarkably strong, especially in the expression "*force*." I give it in full: —

HYMN 158.

"O my God, what must I do?
Thou alone the way canst show;
Thou canst save me in this hour;
I have neither will nor power:

God, if over all thou art,
Greater than my sinful heart,
All thy power on me be shown,
Take away the heart of stone.

Take away my darling sin,
Make me willing to be clean;
Have me willing to receive
All thy goodness waits to give.

Force me, Lord, with all to part;
Tear these idols from my heart;
Now thy love almighty show,
Make even me a creature new.

Jesus, mighty to renew,
Work in me to will and do;
Turn my nature's rapid tide,
Stem the torrent of my pride;

Stop the whirlwind of my will;
Speak, and bid the sun stand still;

Now thy love almighty show,
Make even me a creature new.

Arm of God, thy strength put on;
Bow the heavens, and come down;
All my unbelief o'erthrow;
Lay the aspiring mountain low:

Conquer thy worst foe in me,
Get thyself the victory;
Save the vilest of the race;
Force me to be saved by grace.”

HYMN 206, VERSES 1, 2.

“What am I, O thou glorious God!
And what my father's house to thee,
That thou such mercies hast bestow'd
On me, the vilest reptile, me

I take the blessing from above,
And wonder at thy boundless love.
Me in my blood thy love pass'd by,
And stopp'd, my ruin to retrieve;

Wept o'er my soul thy pitying eye;
Thy bowels yearn'd, and sounded, 'Live!
Dying, I heard the welcome sound,
And pardon in thy mercy found.”

Nor are these all, for such good things as these abound,
and they constrain me to say, that in attacking Arminianism we

have no hostility towards the men who bear the name rather than the nature of that error, and we are opposed not to any body of men, but to the notions which they have espoused.

And now, having made these remarks upon terms used, we must observe that there is nothing upon which men need to be more instructed than upon the question of what Calvinism really is. The most infamous allegations have been brought against us, and sometimes, I must fear, by men who knew them to be utterly untrue; and, to this day, there are many of our opponents, who, when they run short of matter, invent and make for themselves a man of straw, call that John Calvin and then shoot all their arrows at it. We are not come here to defend your man of straw — shoot at it or burn it as you will, and, if it suit your convenience, still oppose doctrines which were never taught, and rail at fictions which, save in your own brain, were never in existence. We come here to state what our views really are, and we trust that any who do not agree with us will do us the justice of not misrepresenting us. If they can disprove our doctrines, let them state them fairly and then overthrow them, but why should they first caricature our opinions and then afterwards attempt to put them down?

Among the cross falsehoods which have been uttered against the Calvinists proper, is the wicked calumny that we hold *the damnation of little infants*. A baser lie was never uttered. There may have existed somewhere, in some corner of the earth, a miscreant who would dare to say that there were infants in hell, but I have never met with him nor have I met with a man who ever saw such a person. We say, with regard to infants, Scripture saith but very little, and, therefore, where Scripture is confessedly scant, it is for no man to determine dogmatically. But I think I speak for the entire body, or certainly with exceedingly few exceptions, and those unknown to me, when I say we hold that all infants are elect of God and are therefore

saved, and we look to this as being the means by which Christ shall see of the travail of his soul to a great degree, and we do sometimes hope that thus the multitude of the saved shall be made to exceed the multitude of the *lost*. Whatever views our friends may hold upon the point, they are not necessarily connected with Calvinistic doctrine. I believe that the Lord Jesus, who said, “Of such is the kingdom of heaven,” doth daily and constantly receive into his loving arms those tender ones who are only shown, and then snatched away to heaven. Our hymns are no ill witness to our faith on this point, and one of them runs thus:

“Millions of infant souls compose
The family above.”

“Toplady, one of the keenest of Calvinists, was of this number. ‘In my remarks,’ says he, ‘on Dr. Nowell, I testified my firm belief that the souls of *all departed infants* are with God in glory; that in the decree of predestination to life, God hath included all whom he decreed to take away in infancy, and that the decree of reprobation hath nothing to do with them.’ Nay, he proceeds farther, and asks with reason, how the anti-Calvinistic system of conditional salvation and election or good works foreseen, will suit with the salvation of infants? It is plain that Arminians and Pelagians must introduce a *new principle* of election, and in so far as the salvation of infants is concerned, become Calvin. Is it not an argument in behalf of Calvinism, that its principle is uniform throughout, and that no change is needed on the ground on which man is saved, whether young or old? John Newton, of London, the friend of Cowper, noted for his Calvinism, holds that the children in heaven exceed its adult inhabitants in all their multitudinous array. Gill, a very champion of Calvinism, held the doctrine, that all dying in

infancy are saved. An intelligent modern writer, (Dr. Russell, of Dundee,) also a Calvinist maintains the same views; and when it is considered that nearly *one-half* of the human race die in early years, it is easy to see what a vast accession must be daily and hourly making to the blessed population of heaven.”

A more common charge, brought by more decent people, — for I must say that the last charge is never brought, except by disreputable persons, — a more common charge is, that we hold clear *fatalism*. Now, there may be Calvinists who are fatalists, but Calvinism and fatalism are two distinct things. Do not most Christians hold the doctrine of the providence of God? Do not all Christians, do not all believers in a God hold the doctrine of his foreknowledge? All the difficulties which are laid against the doctrine of predestination might with equal force, be laid against that of Divine foreknowledge. We believe that God hath predestinated all things from the beginning but there is a difference between the predestinations of an intelligent, all-wise all-bounteous God, and that blind fatalism which simply says, “It is because it is to be.” Between the *predestination* of Scripture and the *fate* of the Koran, every sensible man must perceive a difference of the most essential character. We do not deny that the thing is so ordained that it must be, but why is it to be but that the Father, God, whose name is love, ordained it; not because of and necessity in circumstances that such and such a thing should take place. Though the wheels of providence revolve with rigid exactness, yet not without purpose and wisdom. The wheels are full of eyes, and everything ordained is so ordained that it shall conduce to the grandest of all ends, the glory of God, and next to that the good of his creatures. But we are next met by some who tell us that we preach the wicked and horrible doctrine of *sovereign and unmerited reprobation*. “Oh,” say they, “you teach that men are damned because God made them to be damned, and

that they go to hell, not because of sin, not because of unbelief, but because of some dark decree with which God has stamped their destiny.” Brethren, this is an unfair charge again. Election does not involve reprobation. There may be some who hold unconditional reprobation. I stand not here as their defender, let them defend themselves as best they can; I hold God’s election, but I testify just as clearly that if any man be lost he is lost for sin; and this has been the uniform statement of Calvinistic ministers. I might refer you to our standards, such as “The Westminster Assembly’s Catechism,” and to all our Confessions, for they all distinctly state that man is lost for sin and that there is no punishment put on any man except that which he richly and righteously deserves. If any of you have ever uttered that libel against us, do it not again, for we are as guiltless of that as you are yourselves. I am speaking personally — and I think in this I would command the suffrages of my brethren — I do know that the appointment of God extendeth to all things; but I stand not in this pulpit, nor in any other, to lay the damnation of any man anywhere but upon himself. If he be lost, damnation is all of man, but, if he be saved, still salvation is all of God. To state this important point yet more clearly and explicitly, I shall quote at large from an able Presbyterian divine:

“The pious Methodist is taught that the Calvinist represents God as creating men in order to destroy them. He is taught that Calvinists hold that men are lost, not because they sin, but because they are non-elected. Believing this to be a true statement, it is not wonderful that the Methodist stops short, and declares himself, if not an Arminian, at least an Anti-Predestinarian. But no statement can be more scandalously untrue. It is the uniform doctrine of Calvinism, that God creates all for his own glory; that he is infinitely righteous and benignant, and that where men perish it is only for their sins.

In speaking of suffering, whether in this world or in the world to come; whether it respects angels or men, the Westminster standards (which may be considered as the most authoritative modern statement of the system) invariably connect the punishment with previous sin, and sin only. ‘As for those wicked and ungodly men whom God as a *righteous* judge FOR FORMER SINS doth blind and harden, from them he not only withholdeth his grace, whereby they might have been enlightened in their understandings and wrought upon in their hearts, but sometimes also withdraweth the gifts which they had, and exposeth them to such objects as *their corruption* makes occasion of sin; and withal gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of Satan, whereby it comes to pass that they *harden themselves* even under those means which God useth for the softening of others.’ The Larger Catechism, speaking of the unsaved among angels and men, says, ‘God according to his Sovereign power and the unsearchable counsel of his own will (whereby he extendeth or withholdeth favor as he pleaseth) hath passed by and fore-ordained the rest to dishonor and wrath, *to be for their sin inflicted*, to the praise of the glory of his justice.’ Again, “the end of God appointing this day (of the last judgment) is for the manifestation of the glory of his mercy, in the eternal salvation of the elect, and of his justice in the damnation of the reprobate *who are wicked and disobedient*.” This is no more than what the Methodist and all other Evangelical bodies acknowledge — that where men perish it is in consequence of their sin. If it be asked, why sin which destroys, is permitted to enter the world that is a question which bears not only on the Calvinist, but equally on another parties. They are as much concerned and bound to answer it as he, nay, the question is not confined to Christians.

All who believe in the existence of God — in his righteous character and perfect providence, are equally under obligation to answer it. Whatever may be the reply of others, that of the Calvinist may be regarded as given in the statement of the Confession of Faith, which declares that God's providence extendeth itself even to the first fall, and other sins of angels and men, etc., *yet so as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin.* It is difficult to see what more could be said upon the subject and if such be the undoubted sentiments of Calvinists, then what misrepresentation can be more gross than that which describes them as holding that sinners perish irrespective of their sin, or that God is the author of their sin? What is the declaration of Calvin? "*Every soul departs (at death) to that place which it has prepared for itself while in this world.*"

It is hard to be charged with holding as sacred truth what one abhors as horrid blasphemy, and yet this is the treatment which has been perseveringly meted out to Calvinists in spite of the most solemn and indignant disclaimers. Against nothing have they more stoutly protested than the thought that the infinitely holy, and righteous, and amiable Jehovah is the author of sin, and yet how often do the supporters of rival systems charge them with this as an article of faith?"

A yet further charge against us is, that we *dare not preach the gospel to the unregenerate*, that, in fact, our theology is so narrow and cramped that we cannot preach to sinners. Gentlemen, if you dare to say this, I would take you to any library in the world where the old Puritan fathers are stored up, and I would let you take down any one volume and tell me if you ever rend more telling exhortations and addresses to sinners in any of your own books. Did not Bunyan plead with sinners, and whoever classed him with any but the Calvinists? Did not Charnock,

Goodwin, and how we agonise for souls, and what were they but Calvinists? Did not Jonathan Edwards preach to sinners, and who more clear and explicit on these doctrinal matters. The works of our innumerable divines teem with passionate appeals to the unconverted. Oh, sirs, if I should begin the list, time should fail me. It is an indisputable fact that we have labored more than they all for the winning of souls. Was George Whitfield any the less seraphic? Did his eyes weep the fewer tears or his bowels move with the less compassion because he believed in God's electing love and preached the sovereignty of the Most High? It is an unfounded calumny. Our souls are not stony; our bowels are not withdrawn from the compassion which we ought to feel for our fellow-men; we can hold all our views firmly, and yet can weep as Christ did over a Jerusalem which was certainly to be destroyed. Again, I must say, I am not defending certain brethren who have exaggerated Calvinism. I speak of Calvinism proper, not that which has run to seed, and outgrown its beauty and verdure. I speak of it as I find it in Calvin's Institutes, and especially in his Expositions. I have read them carefully. I take not my views of Calvinism from common repute but from his books.

Nor do I, in thus speaking, even vindicate Calvinism as if I cared for the name, but I mean that glorious system which teaches that salvation is of grace from first to last. And again, then, I say it is an utterly unfounded charge that we dare not preach to sinners.

And then further, that I may clear up these points and leave the less rubbish for my brethren to wheel away, we have sometimes heard it said, but those who say it ought to go to school to read the first book of history, that we who hold Calvinistic views are the enemies of revivals. Why, sirs, in the history of the Church, with but few exceptions, you could not find a revival at all that was not produced by the orthodox faith.

What was that great work which was done by Augustine, when the Church suddenly woke up from the pestiferous and deadly sleep into which Pelagian doctrine had cast it? What was the Reformation itself but the waking up of men's minds to those old truths? However far modern Lutherans may have turned aside from their ancient doctrines, and I must confess some of them would not agree with what I now say yet at any rate, Luther and Calvin had no dispute about Predestination. Their views were identical and Luther, "On the bondage of the will," is as strong a book upon the free grace of God as Calvin himself could have written. Hear that great thunderer while he cries in that book, "Let the Christian reader know then, that God foresees nothing in a contingent manner; but that he foresees' proposes, and acts, from his eternal and unchangeable will. This is the thunder stroke which breaks and overturns Free Will." Need I mention to you better names than Huss, Jerome of Prague Farrel, John Lennox, Wickliffe, Wishart and Bradford? Need I do more than say that these held the same views, and that in their day anything like an Arminian revival was utterly unheard of and undreamed of. And then, to come to more modern times, there is the great exception, that wondrous revival under Mr. Wesley, in which the Wesleyan Methodists had so large a share, but permit me to say, that the strength of the doctrine of Wesleyan Methodism lay in its Calvinism. The great body of the Methodists disclaimed Pelagianism, in whole and in part. They contended for man's entire depravity, the necessity of the direct agency of the Holy Spirit and that the first step in the change proceeds not from the sinner, but from God. They denied at the time that they were Pelagians. Does not the Methodist hold as firmly as ever we do that man is saved by the operation of the Holy Ghost and the Holy Ghost only? And are not many of Mr. Wesley's sermons full of that great truth, that the Holy Ghost is

necessary to regeneration? Whatever mistakes he may have made, he continually preached the absolute necessity of the new birth by the Holy Ghost, and there are some other points of exceedingly close agreement, for instance, even that of human inability. It matters not how some may abuse us, when we say men could not of himself repent or believe, yet, the old Arminian standards said the same. True, they affirm that God has given grace to every man, but they do not dispute the fact, that apart from that grace there was no ability in man to do that which was good in his own salvation. And then, let me say if you turn to the continent of America, how cross the falsehood, that Calvinistic doctrine is unfavourable to revivals. Look at that wondrous shaking under Jonathan Edwards, and others which we might quote. Or turn to Scotland — what shall we say of M'Cheyne? What shall we say of those renowned Calvinists, Dr. Chalmers, Dr. Wardlaw, and before them Livingstone, Haldane, Erskine, and the like? What shall we say of the men of their school, but that, while they held and preached unflinchingly the great truths which we would propound to-day, yet God owned their word, and multitudes here saved. And if it were not perhaps too much like boasting of one's own work under God, I might say, personally I have never found the preaching of these doctrines lull this Church to sleep, but everwhile they have loved to maintain these truths, they have agonised for the souls of men, and the 1600 or more whom I have myself baptized, upon profession of their faith, are living testimonies that these old truths in modern times have not lost their power to promote a revival of religion.

I have thus cleared away these allegations at the outset; I shall now need a few minutes more to say, with regard to the Calvinistic system, that there are some things to be said in its favor, to which of course I attach but little comparative importance, but they ought not to be ignored. It is a fact that

the system of doctrines called the Calvinistic, is so *exceedingly simple* and so readily learned, that as a system of Divinity it is more easily taught and more easily grasped by unlettered minds than any other. The poor have the Gospel preached to them in a style which assists their memories and commends itself to their judgments. It is a system which was practically acknowledged on high philosophic grounds by such no as Bacon, Leibnitz, and Newton, find yet it can charm the soul of a child and expand the intellect of a peasant. And then it has another virtue. I take it that the last is no mean one, but it has another — that when it is preached there is a something in it which *excites thought*. A man may hear sermons upon the other theory which shall glance over him as the swallow's wing gently sweeps the brook, but these old doctrines either make a man so angry that he goes home and cannot sleep for very hatred, or else they bring him down into lowliness of thought, feeling the immensity of the things which he has heard. Either way it excites and stirs him up not temporarily, but in a most lasting manner. These doctrines haunt him, he kicks against the pricks, and full often the word forces a way into his soul. And I think this is no small thing for any doctrine to do in an age given to slumber, and with human hearts so indifferent to the truth of God. I know that many men have gained more good by being made angry under a sermon than by being pleased by it, for being angry they have turned the truth over and over again, and at last the truth has burned its way right into their hearts. They have played with edge-tools, but they have cut themselves at last.

It has this singular virtue also — it is so *coherent in all its parts*. You cannot vanquish a Calvinist. You may think you can, but you cannot. The stones of the great doctrines so fit into each other, that the more pressure there is applied to remove them the more strenuously do they adhere. And you may mark, that

you cannot receive one of these doctrines without believing all. Hold for instance that man is utterly depraved, and you draw the inference then that certainly if God has such a creature to deal with salvation must come from God alone, and if from him, the offended one, to an offending creature, then he has a right to give or withhold his mercy as he wills; you are thus forced upon election, and when you have gotten that you have all: the others must follow. Some by putting the strain upon their judgments may manage to hold two or three points and not the rest, but sound logic I take it requires a man to hold the whole or reject the whole, the doctrines stand like soldiers in a square, presenting on every side a line of defense which it is hazardous to attack, but easy to maintain. And mark you, in these times when error is so rife and neology strives to be so rampant, it is no little thing to put into the hands of a young man a weapon which can slay his foe which he can easily learn to handle, which he may grasp tenaciously, wield readily, and carry without fatigue; a weapon, I may add, which no rust can corrode and no blows can break, trenchant, and well annealed, a true Jerusalem blade of a temper fit for deeds of renown. The coherency of the parts, though it be of course but a trifle in comparison with other things, is not unimportant. And then, I add, — but this is the point my brethren will take up — it has this excellency, that it is scriptural, and that it is consistent with the experience of believers. Men generally grow more Calvinistic as they advance in years. Is not that a sign that the doctrine is right. As they are growing riper for heaven, as they are getting nearer to the rest that remaineth for the people of God, the soul longs to feed on the finest of the wheat and abhors chaff and husks. And then I add — and, in so doing, I would refute a calumny that has sometimes been urged — this glorious truth has this excellency that it produces the holiest of men. We can look back through all our annals and say, to those

who oppose us, you can mention no names of men more holy, more devoted, more loving, more generous than those which we can mention. The saints of our calendar, though uncannonized by Rome, rank first in the book of life. The name of Puritan needs only to be heard to constrain our reverence. Holiness had reached a height among them which is rare indeed, and well it might for they loved and lived the truth. And if you say that our doctrine is inimical to human liberty, we point you to Oliver Cromwell and to his brave Ironsides, Calvinists to a man. If you say, it leads to inaction, we point you to the Pilgrim Fathers and the wildernesses they subdued. We can put our finger upon every spot of land, the wide world o'er, and say, Where was something done by a man who believed in God's decrees; and inasmuch as he did this, it is proof it did not make him inactive, it did not lull him to sloth."

The better way, however of proving this point is for each of us who hold these truths, to be more prayerful, more wakeful more holy, more active than we have ever been before, and by so doing, we shall put to silence the gainsaying of foolish men. A living argument, is an argument which tells upon every man; we cannot deny what we see and feel. Be it ours, if aspersed and calumniated, to disprove it by a blameless life, and it shall yet come to pass, that our Church and its sentiments too shall come forth "Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."

A Sermon
BY THE REV. JOHN BLOOMFIELD
of Meard's Court, Soho

My dear Christian friends, those who best know my cast of mind will readily believe me when I say I would rather have spoken on the majesty and mystery of the person of Christ, or I would rather have spoken on the perfection and intrinsic worth of the mediation of Christ, or on the great attractions of Christ as a gracious and omnipotent Savior, than on the subject that has been assigned to me. The subject that has been given me is that of the doctrine of eternal and personal election; I have to prove that the doctrine of election is a scriptural truth, and, at the commencement of my few remarks on this profound project, allow me to say that I hold and firmly believe the Bible to be a revelation from God, that the revelations of God's mind are essentially and infallibly true, that its ancient historical records are of the greatest value, that its prophecies are to be studied and to be venerated, that the doctrines of the Bible are in harmony with the majesty, wisdom, holiness and goodness of their Author. Now it should not be a point with us whether a doctrine is liked or disliked, whether it is believed or disbelieved, but whether it is a doctrine according to godliness, whether it is the doctrine of the Word of God. Truth has never been popular in this world: Jesus Christ when on earth was by no means popular. Truth never will be popular in this world while men are influenced by sin, and enmity against God. Perhaps no doctrine has met with such bitter opposition as the doctrine on which I have to speak. It has been fearfully

misunderstood for a want of prayerful and independent study of the Holy Scriptures, or perhaps from the miserable misrepresentations that have been given of it by some public anew. It is a truth which has been bitterly opposed: we may oppose a doctrine which we cannot with all our puny efforts depose. We may dispute in our blindness and enmity a doctrine which we cannot refute. We believe firmly that the doctrine of election to salvation in Jesus Christ is a doctrine of the Scriptures. We believe in sovereign love, but not in sovereign hatred. We believe in salvation by the grace of God without works, but not in damnation without sin. We believe firmly in election to salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, but we discard from our creed the miserable, wretched doctrine of reprobation without sin. Is the doctrine of election a Scriptural doctrine?

Can we grove it from the word of God? It is one thing to believe it to be a doctrine of Divine revelation, and it is another thing to have the sanctifying grace and power of it in our hearts. The election we read of in the Scriptures is inseparably connected with holiness, and we believe in no election to salvation without faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He who has appointed salvation as an end has appointed the methods by which that end shall be accomplished. Perhaps no man possessed of his reasoning powers questions the truth that God has predestinated harvest as long as this world shall continue. But without sowing of seed, without the agricultural labor that is given to the land, we should have no harvest, because he who predestinated harvest predestinated the sowing of the seed as much. And God has appointed us not unto wrath, but to obtain salvation through Jesus Christ. I shall endeavor now to prove, from the quotations of a few Scriptures, that the doctrine of eternal and personal election is a Scriptural and Divine truth. Jesus Chris: himself was said to be “chosen of God and

precious.” He is God’s elect, for Jehovah himself says, “Behold my servant, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth.” Angels that continue in their unfallen dignity and felicity are termed elect angels. Elect angels are employed as ministering spirits to those that shall be heirs of salvation.

Elect angels will be employed in the gathering of God’s elect into the heavenly world. The Jewish nation was a chosen nation, and as such they were privileged with the oracles of God, and stood as a representative people. They were chosen not because of their personal worth, they were chosen not because of their goodness, but they were chosen to be a separated people, a people that should be God’s peculiar treasure, and should be holiness unto the Lord; of them it was said, “For thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God — the Lord hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.” Jesus Christ himself, in the 24th chapter of Matthew, speaks of certain days being shortened because of God’s elect. The Psalmist craved to be remembered with the favor that God was pleased to bear towards his people, that he might see the good of his chosen. And Jesus Christ himself said to his disciples, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.” And the Apostle Paul very often in his writings has brought out this great and profound doctrine. He says, “There is a remnant recording to the election of grace.” He speaks to the Ephesian Church, and says, “Ye are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world that ye may be holy, and that ye may stand before God without blame in love.” God hath in the exercise of his sovereignty *chosen a people* in Christ to *salvation* before time began — it *was* before the foundation of the *world*, here is its antiquity — it is in Christ according to the riches of God’s grace, and it is to *holiness* and salvation. He, in his addresses to the Church at Thessalonica, said he could but

thank God, that they were chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth.” Peter speaks of the people of God as a chosen generation and a royal priesthood. He wrote to the *elect* according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. More Scriptures might be given upon this subject, but I think they would be unnecessary. If we would only give our attention to the simple teachings of the Spirit of God by the prophets, by the Psalmist, by Christ, and by the Apostles, we could not have one moment’s doubt as to the doctrine of Divine election being a Scriptural truth.

My second point is to show that God has chosen his people to the highest possible relation to himself, and to the enjoyment of the most precious blessings in Christ. All spiritual relations stand in Christ, all spiritual relations originated in God’s grace; and all spiritual relations are standing manifestations of the sovereignty of God’s favor and of the immutability of God’s love. If we are the sons of God, what has constituted us the sons of God? We are sons of God by God’s sovereign love; it is by an act of adoption, it is by an act of Jehovah; will, that we are constituted his sons and his daughters. Adoption is relation established to which we have no natural right; adoption is one thing, and the spirit of adoption is another.

Now Christ is God’s first-born, and all the family are chosen in him; Christ is the glorious Head of the Church, and all the family of God are chosen members in him; Christ is the everlasting Priest of his Church and he represents all the family, just as the Jewish priest represented by his breast-plate and in the fulfillment of his office the whole of the Jewish nation. All relation to God then stands in Christ, originated in the sovereignty of Jehovah’s will, and is expressive of the infinite love of Jehovah’s heart. We are chosen to salvation — that is the end, the means by which that end is accomplished is by the

“sanctification of the Spirit, and the belief of the truth.” We are chosen to use fullness, every Christian should seek to be useful; every Christian in his right mind is a witness for God, every Christian, as he is influenced by Christian principles, bears testimony to the dignity of the relation that God has established and bears testimony to the holiness of the principles by which his heart is influenced, every Christian should be a living gospel, his life should bear testimony to the holiness of that Christianity that he studies and is influenced by. We are chosen to eternal life, but it is eternal life through Christ. Without faith, there is no evidence of interest in Christ, without faith there is no enjoyment of salvation by Christ. Without faith, a man has no evidence of interest in the Lamb’s Book of Life, but he who believes in Christ, however weak and trembling his faith has evidence in his own heart that his name is written in the Lamb’s Book of Life and his conduct corresponding with the holiness of the gospel he carries in his life a witness to his interest in all the purposes of heaven and in all the redemptive excellency of the Lord Jesus Christ. The great Evidence of interest in election, is holiness. A man to talk of believing in election and going to heaven, because he is one of God’s elect, and yet living in sin, and in enmity to God, this can never, never be. We are chosen unto salvation, it is said “through sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth;” and without this sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth, there is no holiness; and, “without holiness, no man can see the Lord.” Without holiness, no man would be capable of serving God in heaven; without holiness, no man would be capable of beholding the glories of Jesus Christ there; without holiness, no man can serve God with power and success here; without holiness, no man can have fellowship with God, and so have fellowship with us, for truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his son Jesus Christ. It is only by a practical life of consistency with faith in

Christ Jesus, that we have evidence of our interest in election. We are chosen, not because we are holy, but that we might be holy; we are chosen, not because we are good, but that by the principles of the everlasting Gospel, we might become so; we are chosen, not because we are saved but that we may be saved through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I hold, dear friends, that the great doctrine of election should be preached. It should be preached, because it is part of a grand system of truth. Truth is not one doctrine, but it is a grand system, and you cannot leave out one part without impairing its beauty, nor leave out one part of this system without weakening its strength. The beauty of truth lies in its perfection, and in that harmony of its connection the strength of truth lies in the unity of its parts, and it is like gold dust — it is all precious. If Election be not a truth inspired by the Spirit of the living God — if it be not a truth proclaimed by the prophets that were inspired — if it be not a truth published by the Apostles — if it be not a truth found in the teachings of the Word of God, let us never say one word about it; but if it was truth in the days of the Apostles, then it is no less a truth now. What the Apostles preached, I hold, we ought to preach in the spirit of love, in the spirit of faith, in the spirit of meekness, entirely depending on the power of the Holy Spirit to give us success in the conversion of immortal souls. One moment longer, and I have done. There is nothing in the doctrine of election that is discouraging to a penitent, seeking sinner. There is everything in the Gospel to welcome the returning prodigal to his Father's house; there is everything to meet the necessities of an awakened conscience; there is everything in the Gospel to satisfy the longing of a penitent soul. I know some may say, "I fear, Sir, I shall not be saved because I am not one of God's elect." Art thou a sinner? art thou a penitent sinner? art thou a seeking sinner? If thou art a seeking, penitent sinner, you cannot imagine how welcome

you are to the provisions of infinite love. Every truth in the Gospel is open to you; every promise in the Gospel is open to you; every invitation in Scripture speaks to you. If thou art a sinner seeking mercy, let this cheer thy heart — that God delighteth in mercy. If thou art seeking salvation, Jesus is a willing and an able Savior, and he has said, “All that the Father giveth to me shall come to me, and him that cometh I will in no wise cast out.” There is nothing dear friends, in the doctrine of election as it stands in the Scriptures that should discourage any penitent in seeking after mercy through Jesus Christ. I know, in the miserable misrepresentations of this great and glorious truth, men might well be discouraged from seeking mercy through the Savior.

But see it in its Scriptural connection; see it in the simplicity of it as it is put before us by the great Apostles; see it in the teachings of the Savior himself, and there is nothing in it but that which welcomes a penitent sinner. It is a great encouragement to a seeking Soul. Does the farmer who sows his seed sow that seed with less or more encouragement because he knows that God has ordained that harvest shall be? He sows his seed with a heart brimful with hope, because God has promised that a harvest shall be as long as the world continues. Only let the means be used according to the Holy Scriptures; only let the poor awakened penitent sinner renounce everything but Christ and him crucified, mercy will roll into his troubled heart and fill his spirit with peace, and he shall come off more than conqueror, shouting, Victory through the blood of the Lamb — Victory, victory through Jesus Christ.

387 HUMAN DEPRAVITY

A Sermon BY THE REV. EVAN PROBERT of Bristol

My Christian friends, you are quite aware that the subject which in to engage our further attention this afternoon, is **HUMAN DEPRAVITY** — a subject about which there are different opinions, which I shall not attempt to examine at the present time, but I shall confine myself to the teachings of God's word, which is the only infallible rule of faith and practice, and from which we learn what man was when he came from the hands of his Maker, and what he is now as a fallen creature. It is explicitly declared by the sacred writers, that God made man upright, and therefore his condition was one of perfect innocence and high moral excellence. There was no tendency to evil in any part of his nature, nothing that deviated in the least from the lute of moral rectitude. Whatever his duty was, it was to him his invariable and delightful employment. But, alas! man in honor did not long continue. Through the insinuating wiles of the devil, our first parents were induced to violate the positive command of their Maker, the observance of which was the condition of their happiness, and, as a punishment for their transgression, they were driven out of Paradise, and became liable to be cut off by the sentence of death, and consigned to everlasting misery; and, in consequence of our connection with Adam, as our federal head and representative, we became subject to the dreadful consequences of his fall. This is evident from the testimony of the Apostle Paul, in the fifth Chapter of his Epistle to the

Romans. There we read, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so that death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." And, again, "By the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, and by the disobedience of one, many were made sinners." It is evident from these passages that God viewed Adam in the covenant of works as the head and representative of his natural posterity, and consequently, when he fell we fell in him, and became subject to the tremendous consequences of his fall. Here it may be asked, what are the consequences of his fall? what were they to him, and what are they to us? To answer this question, we must ascertain what the Apostle means when he uses the words death, judgment, and condemnation. I think that he uses these words in opposition to the grace of God, to justification of life, and to the reign of the redeemed in life by Jesus Christ. These are the benefits which result from the grace of God through Christ, and which stand opposed to the evils which sin has introduced into our world; and, as it cannot be supposed that these benefits relate to temporal life, or solely to the resurrection of the body, it cannot be that the evils involved in the words, death, judgment, and condemnation, relate simply to temporal death, but they must be considered as including temporal, legal, and spiritual death.

From the very hour that Adam transgressed, he became mortal, — the sentence of death was pronounced upon him, and the seeds of depravity were sown in his system; thus the fair and beautiful and glorious creature began to fade, wither, and die, and all his posterity became mortal in him, and have from that day to this come into the world dying. Whatever the case of man might have been if he had not sinned we cannot say. "This however we know, that he would not have died; for death is the result of the federal failure of the father of our race. "Dust thou art," God said to him, "and unto dust shalt thou

return.” “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.” “In Adam all died.” So that it may be said to every one of Adam’s sons and daughters, “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”

But Adam by his transgression not only brought temporal death upon himself and his posterity, he also brought legal death. Having violated the law that was given him to observe, he became under the curse of that law, which involved not only temporal death and expulsion from Paradise, but an exposure to suffer the just demerits of his transgression; and, in consequence of our connection with him as our federal head, we are under the curse of the same law — “By one man’s disobedience judgment came upon all men to condemnation;” and further, “By the offense of one many were made sinners.” The very moment our progenitor transgressed, all his descendants became subject to the curse. The holy nature of God abhorred the apostate race, the source of his holy and righteous law has ever rested upon that race, judgment has been given and recorded against us as a fallen world, in the court of Heaven, and unless it is reversed it must fall upon us with all its tremendous consequences.

We are also, in consequence of Adam’s transgression become the subjects of spiritual death, which consists not merely in the deprivation of the principle of life, but in having become depraved creatures, all the faculties of our souls and members of our bodies are depraved so that it may be said of us, as the prophet says of the Jewish nation, “The head is sick, the whole heart is faint, from the sole of the foot unto the head there is no soundness.” What! no soundness in any part? nothing good in any part? nothing spiritually good? nothing if cherished and fostered that will not lead to God, to Heaven, and to happiness? Nothing whatever. Let no one mistake me. I do not mean to say for a single moment, that sin has destroyed

any of the faculties of man's soul, for they are all there. They all exist as they did when they were produced; but I mean to say, that sin has deprived man of the principle of spiritual life, and made him a depraved and debased creature; and we believe that we can prove this from the word of God, as well as from observation.

First, — From the conduct of little children. Children begin to sin very early in life. If there were any good in us, it would show itself in infancy, before good habits became corrupted, and evil principles were produced by our connection with the world. But do little children prefer good? Are they inclined to the good and the excellent? Do you see from the earliest period of their existence that they are desirous of good? On the contrary, I say, as soon as they begin to act, they prove by their action that in them there is a depraved nature, from which they act. "Madness," says the wise man, "is bound up in the heart of a child," they astray from the womb telling lies.

But it may be said, in the way of objection, that this may arise from the unfavourable circumstances in which some children are placed. No doubt, unfavourable circumstances have a bad influence upon the minds of children; but it is not so with the whole race. Point out to me, one child who is disposed from in infancy to seek that which is good, that which is holy. And surely if the tendency of infants from their earliest history is to evil it is a proof that it must arise from the evil propensities within them, which grog; with their growth, and strengthen with their strength.

Secondly, — We have further proof of human depravity from the aversion of sinners to come to Christ. They are invited to come, persuaded to come, and are assured that they shall find pardon, acceptance, and salvation. But they cannot be induced to come to him, and why will they not come? Is it because he is not willing to receive them, or because there is

anything in him to prevent them? No but it is because of the deep-rooted depravity in their hearts. The heart is averse to all that is good, and therefore rejects the Savior and turns away from him. Hence he complained when in our world, “How often would I have gathered you, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.” “We will not come to me, that ye might have life!” What more need be added? Man turns away in proud disdain from all the blessings of the gospel, and the glories of heaven brought before him, and rushes on with steady purpose to damnation. “Light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.” Oh, to how many in this land may it be said, “They hate knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord; they would none of his counsel, they despised all his reproof”

Thirdly, — We have further evidence of native depravity from the testimony of Scripture. In the first place, let me refer you to the fifth chapter of the Book of Genesis, and the third verse. There we read, that Adam, after he had lived one hundred and thirty years, begat a son in his own likeness after his image. Mind, the image in which Adam was created was the image of God, but that image he had lost before he begat Seth; therefore, the image in which Seth was born must have been the image of his progenitor, as a fallen and depraved creature. Let me refer you, in the second place, to the third chapter of the Gospel by John. “He that is born of the flesh,” said the Savior to Nicodemus, “is flesh, and he that is born of the Spirit is spirit.” To be born of the flesh, according to the wisest interpretation of that passage, is to be born of a depraved nature, to be born of the Spirit is to be born of the Holy Spirit of God — which birth, the Savior told Nicodemus he must experience before he could see the kingdom of God. And again, we have several passages in proof of this point. In the seventh

chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, at the fifth verse of that chapter, the Apostle says, “When we were in the flesh, the motions of sin by the law which worked in us to bring forth fruit unto death.” “When we were in the flesh,” means this — when we were in an unrenewed depraved state, In the same chapter he says, at the 14th verse, “We know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin,” as if he had said, “I am as a sinner, a depraved creature.” In accordance with this the Apostle says, at the 18th verse of the same chapter, “In me — that is, in my flesh — there dwelleth no good thing.” No love to God, no holy aspirations! No, none whatever. At the beginning of the eighth chapter of the same Epistle, we find the terms “flesh” and “Spirit” placed in opposition to each other, “Who walk not after the flesh,” says the Apostle, describing Christians, “but after the Spirit.” To be in the flesh is to be in a depraved state, in be in the Spirit is to be a partaker of his grace, to walk after the flesh is to walk after the dictates of corrupt principles and propensities, to walk after the Spirit is to be governed by spiritual principles and by the Holy Spirit of God, and the Apostle, in writing to the Galatians, says to them, “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.” These passages, I think, prove beyond all contradiction, that man as a fallen creature, is a depraved creature, destitute of any good.

There are many other passages of Scripture that confirm this doctrine, such as the following “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean.” Not one. What is man that he should be clean, or the son of man that he should be just. “Behold,” says the Psalmist, “I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” Read the account of man before the deluge, and there we find that every imagination and the thoughts of his heart were only evil, and that continually. The same account is given of him after the flood. The deluge could

not wipe away the stains of moral pollution, could not destroy in man the deep-rooted depravity of his heart. “The heart,” says Jeremiah, “is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it,” I think that what our blessed Lord said to the Jews of old, is applicable to every unconverted man under heaven — “But I know you that ye have not the love of God in you.” Some of you may be more humane than others; more benevolent than others, more compassionate than others, as men, and as women, but one has as much of the love of God in him as others. “The carnal mind is enmity against God,” against the being of God, against the government of God, against the gospel of God, against the purposes of God. The enmity of the human heart is unconquerable by any human agency whatever. It is mortal enmity, it strikes at the being of God, and, therefore as President Edwards, of America, justly observes, “that when it found God in; our nature, in our world, it put him to death on the accursed tree.” Such, my brethren, is the enmity of the heart of man, such is its deep-rooted depravity, that in him there is no good thing. We can never speak too bad of what sin has done for us, and we can never speak too much, or too well, of what God has done for us, in the person of his Son, and in us, by the agency of his Holy Spirit.

Fourthly — The doctrines of human depravity may be proved from those passages which assert the universal necessity of redemption by Jesus Christ. “Thou shalt call his name Jesus,” said the angel, “because he shall save his people from their sins.” “In him we have redemption through his blood,” says St. Paul, “even the forgiveness of sin according to the riches of his grace.” Now, the work of redemption presupposes the sinful state of man, and implies a deliverance from that state and from the punishment to which man is exposed. Hence it is said of Christ, that he came into the world to save sinners, to seek and to save that which was lost, and that he

died — the just for the unjust — that he might bring us to God. Now, if redemption by Christ is necessary, it is evident that man is a sinner, and, if man is a sinner, it is evident that man has a depraved nature. You cannot make anything else of it. Say what you like about man and about his excellencies, you must come to this conclusion, that he is a condemned and a depraved creature, or else he would not need redemption through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Fifthly — The passages that assert the universal necessity of the new birth prove this very truth — “Except a man be born of water,” said the Savior, “and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Marvel not that I said unto you, ye must be born again.” But if a man has some good in him, and if that good could be cherished, and be increased, and worked up so as to make men fit for heaven, what need of the new birth? what need of the Spirit of all grace to renew him in the spirit of his mind? Whenever, my brethren, you pray to God for the Spirit to change the human heart, whether you believe the doctrine or not, you imply it in your petition before the mercy-seat. They are represented by the sacred writers as having been called from darkness into light, as having an unction from the Holy One whereby they know all things, and those of them who have been called readily acknowledge that they were once foolish, once deceived and deceiving, once depraved — very depraved; and not only so, but the very best of Christians in the world confess with humility the depravity of their hearts, and I believe that the man who knows himself best is the man who is most ready to confess this and to humble himself before God — “Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” And while Christians feel this, their language is, “Create within me a clean heart, oh God! and renew a right spirit within me; purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean, wash me and I shall be whiter

than snow.” Apply the blood of sprinkling to my guilty conscience, and let the Spirit of all grace work in my polluted and depraved heart, and form me to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ, and meeten my immortal spirit for the inheritance of the saints in light, and of angels in glory. My dear friends, I need not say more.

I should not think there is an individual here this afternoon who is not disposed to agree with me, when I say that man is a fallen creature, is a depraved creature, is a condemned creature: he is under the curse of God's righteous law, and at the same time the subject of the reigning power of depravity, the subject of the effects of sin throughout his whole nature; and that, as a sinner, let it be recorded in high heaven there is no good in man's nature until God puts it there, and you will never be brought, my beloved hearers, into a right state of mind before tied, until you are brought to feel that you have nothing, and that you must have all in the Lord Jesus Christ. “Oh! Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself!” But here are messed tidings, “But in me is their help found.” Does not this subject, my hearers, teach us, in the first place, the amazing long suffering of God towards our race. God might, as soon as man sinned without the least imputation of injustice to his character, have cut him down, because the fall was the result of his criminal choice, and attended by the most aggravating circumstances; but God has borne with us, and is bearing still, which shows that he has no pleasure in the death of the sinner, but rather that he should turn from his ways and live. “Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die, oh! house of Israel?” And does not the subject teach us also the helplessness of man as a sinner? he is unable to atone for his sins or to renew his heart. Many attempts have been made to atone for human transgression, and to cleanse and purify the human heart but they have all failed not one has succeeded. No sacrifice, short of an infinite one, could satisfy

Divine justice and magnify the broken law. No power, short of the omnipotent energy of the Eternal Spirit, can renew the human heart. But, while man is a helpless creature he is not a hopeless creature. We do not say to him there is no hope. Oh, no! I rejoice in that thought at this very moment. God has remembered us in our lowest state, he has laid help upon one that is mighty, one who, by his passive and active obedience, has made the law and made it honorable, satisfied the claims of Divine justice, so that God can be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ; and while he made atonement for our transgressions, he has procured for us the Spirit of all grace to renew our nature, to transform us into the likeness of himself, and to prepare us in the use of means for the inheritance of the saints in light. Those of us who are made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and, I trust, most of us are — would to God that I could believe that we all are — let us pray for a larger measure of the Spirit, upon ourselves, individually, and upon the world around us.

Surely, my hearers, my dear brother who has to occupy this platform, and who has to unfurl to you the banner of the cross, will need a large measure of the Holy Spirit. May He come upon his head, and upon his heart; and may he never ascend this platform but in His strength, and under His guidance, and in His light; may he never preach a sermon without its being blessed to the conversion of souls, and the building up of the Church; and may you, as a Christian Church, continue earnest in prayer for the Spirit to come, and it is the Spirit will reconcile us to each other, the Spirit will remove differences between Arminians and Calvinists, the Spirit will bring us to see, by-and-by, eye to eye, and this world will be filled with the glory of God. May the Lord command his blessing upon these remarks, for his name's sake. Amen.

The Meeting then adjourned till half-past six. After the friends had reassembled —

The Rev. C. H. SPURGEON said, I wish to make one or two observations before I introduce to you the speakers of this evening. Controversy is never a very happy element for the child of God: he would far rather be in communion than engaged in defense of the faith or in attack upon error.

But the soldier of Christ knows no choice in his Master's commands. He may feel it to be better for him to lie upon the bed of rest than to stand covered with the sweat and dust of battle; but as a soldier he has learned to obey, and the rule of his obedience is not his personal comfort but his Lord's absolute command. The servant of God must endeavor to maintain all the truth which his Master has revealed to him, because, as a Christian soldier, this IS part of his duty. But while he does so, he accords to others the liberty which he enjoys himself. In his own house of prayer, he must and will maintain that which he believes to be true. He does not feel himself at all out of temper or angry when he hears that in other places there are some holding different views of what the truth is, who as honestly, and perhaps as forcibly, endeavor to maintain their views. To our own Master we stand or fall; we have no absolute judge of right or wrong incarnate in the flesh on earth So-day. Nor is even the human judgment itself an infallible evidence of our being, for since the fall, no powers of mortals are free from imperfection. Our judgment is not necessarily a fully enlightened one, and we must therefore let another man's judgment also be his guide unto God; but we must not forget that every man is responsible to the Most High for the use of that judgment, for the use of that mental power which God has given him, by which he is to weigh and balance the arguments of either side. I have found commonly that, with regard to the doctrine of grace which we preach, there are a great many

objections raised. One of the simplest trades will the world is the raising of objections. You never need, if you wish to set up in that line of business, to look abroad for capital or resources; however poor and penniless a man may be, even in wits, he can easily manufacture difficulties. It is said “that a fool may raise objections which a thousand wise men could not answer.” I would not hesitate to say that I could bring objections to your existence to- night, which you could not disprove. I could sophisticate and mistily until I brought out the conclusion that you were blind, and deaf, and dumb, and I am not sure that by any process of logic you would be able to prove that you were not so. It might be clear enough to you that you could both speak, and see, and hear. The only evidence, however I suppose that you could give would be by speaking, and seeing, and hearing, which might be conclusive enough, but if it were left to be a mere matter of word-fighting for schoolmen, I question whether the caviler might not cavil against you to the judgment day in order to dispute you out of the evidence of your very senses. The raising of difficulties is the easiest trade in all the world, and, permit me to add, it is not one of the most honorable. The raising of objections has been espoused, you know, by that great and mighty master of falsehood in the olden times, and it has been carried on full often by those whose doubts about the truth sprung rather from their hearts than from their heads. Some difficulties however, ought to be met, and let me now remove one or two of them. There are some who say, “Provided the doctrines of grace be true, what is the use of our preaching?” Of course, I can hardly resist a smile while I put this splendid difficulty — it is so huge a one. If there are so many who are to be saved, then why preach? You cannot diminish, you cannot increase the number, why preach the Gospel? Now, I thought my friend Mr. Bloomfield anticipated this difficulty well enough. There must be a harvest,

— why sow why plough? Simply because the harvest is ordained in the use of means. The reason why we preach at all is because God has ordained to save some. If he had not we could not see the good of preaching at all. Why! we should come indeed on a fool's errand if we came here without the Master's orders at our back. His elect shall be saved — every one of them, — and if not by my instrumentality or that of any brotherhood present, if not by any instrumentality, then would God sooner call them by his Holy Spirit, without the voice of the minister, than that they should perish. But this is the very reason why we preach, because we wish to have the honor of being the means, in the hand of God, of calling these elect ones to himself. The certainty of the result quickens us in our work, and surely it would stay none but a fool in his labor. Because God ordains that his word shall not return unto him void, therefore, we preach that word, because, “as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth and maketh it to bring forth and bud, even so doth the word of the Lord accomplish his purpose;” therefore, we would have our doctrine to drop as the rain and distil as the dew, and as the small rain upon the tender herb. But, there are some again who say, “To what purpose after all, is your inviting any to come, when the Spirit of God alone constrains them to come; and why, especially, preach to those whom you believe to be so depraved that they cannot and will not come?” Ay, just so, this is a serious difficulty to everything except faith. Do you see Ezekiel yonder; he is about to preach a sermon. By his leave, we will stop him. “Ezekiel, where are you about to preach?” “I am about,” saith he, “to preach to a strange congregation — dead, dry bones, lying in a mass in a valley.” “But, Ezekiel, they have no power to live.” “I know that,” saith he. “To what purpose, then, is your preaching to them? If they have no power, and if the breath must come from

the four winds, and they have no life in themselves, to what purpose do you preach?" "I am ordered to preach," saith he, "commanded," and he does so. He prophesies, and afterwards mounting to a yet higher stage of faith, he cries, "Come from the four winds, oh breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." And the wind comes, and the effect of his ministry is seen in their life. So preach we to dead sinners; so pray we for the living Spirit. So, by faith, do we expect his Divine influence, and it come, — cometh not from man nor of man, nor by blood, nor by the will of the fly, but from the sovereign will of God. But notwithstanding it comes instrumentally through the faith of the preacher while he pleads with man, "as though God did beseech them by us, we pray them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God." But if ten thousand other objections were raised, my simple reply could be just this "We can raise more objections against your theory, than you can against ours." We do not believe that our scheme is free from difficulties; it were uncandid if we were to say so. But we believe that we have not the tithe of the difficulties to contend with that they have on the opposite side of the question. It is not hard to find in those texts which appear to be most against us, a key, by which they are to be harmonized, and we believe it to be utterly impossible, without wresting Scripture, to turn those texts which teach our doctrine, to teach any other thing whatsoever. They are plain, pointed, pertinent. If the Calvinistic scheme were the whole sum and substance of all truth, why then surely, if it held everything within some five or six doctrines, you might begin to think that man were God, and that God's theology were less than infinite in its sweep. What are we, that we should grasp the infinite? We shall never measure the marches of eternity. Who shall compass with a span the Eternal God, and who shall think out anew his infinite thoughts? We pretend not that Calvinism is a plumb line to

fathom the deeps; but we do say, that it is a ship which can sail safely over its surface, and that every wave shall speed it onwards towards its destined haven. To fathom and to comprehend is neither your business nor mine, but to learn, and then, having learned, to teach to other", is the business of each Christian man; and thus would we do, God being our helper. One friend kindly suggests a difficulty to me, which, having just spoken of, I shall sit down. That amazing difficulty has to do with the next speaker's topic, and, therefore, I touch it. It says in the Scriptures, that Paul would not have us destroy him with our meat for whom Christ died. Therefore, the inference is — only mark, we do not endorse the logic — the inference is, that you may destroy some with your meat for whom Christ died. That inference I utterly deny. But then, let me put it thus. Do you know that a man may be guilty of a sin which he cannot commit? Does that startle you? Every man is guilty of putting God out of existence, if he says in his heart, "No God." But he cannot put God out of existence, and yet, the guilt is there, because he would if he could. There be some who crucify the Son of God afresh. They cannot, — he is in heaven, he is beyond their reach. And yet, because their deeds would do that, unless some power restrained, they are guilty of doing what they can never do, because the end and aim of their doings would be to destroy Christ, if he were here. Now, then, it is quite consistent with the doctrine that no man can destroy any for whom Christ died, still to insist upon it that a man may be guilty of the blood of souls. He may do that which, unless God prevented it, — and that is no credit to him, — unless God prevented it, would destroy souls for whom Jesus Christ died. But, again I say, I have not come here to-night to anticipate and to answer all objections; I have only done that, that some troubled conscience might find peace. This was not a meeting of discussion, but for the explaining of our own

views, and the teaching them simply to the people. I now shall call upon my beloved brother to take up the point of particular redemption.

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PARTICULAR REDEMPTION

A Sermon

BY THE REV. J. A. SPURGEON
of Southampton

I think it is well that the death of Christ and its consequent blessings should occupy one place in our discussion here tonight; for not only is it the central truth in the Calvinistic theory, but the death of Christ is the center point of all history and of all time. The devout of all ages have stood and with anxious glance into these deep mysteries, searching what, or what manner of things the Holy Spirit did by them testify and reveal; and we know that hereafter, in the world of glory, the redeemed shall sing of these things for ever, and shall find in the Redeemer and in his work, fresh matter for love and for praise as eternity shall roll on. We take our stand between the two, and I think the language of our hearts to-night is akin to all ages of the Church of Christ, — “God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Now the grand result of the death of our Lord — though not the only result — the grand result of that death, so far as man is concerned, is the redemption which it ultimately achieves and with regard to the extent of that redemption, we believe the Scriptures are plain and speak most clearly, when they tell of a final day of manifestation, when the redeemed *from amongst* men shall take their stand before the Redeemer, to sing

of him who, as the good shepherd, hath laid down his life for his sheep, and has purchased unto himself a peculiar people — his body, the Church. Now, we believe that, in reaching that grand and final result there are many steps that must be taken and we think that, from these preliminary steps, there are multitudes that gain rich handfuls of blessings who shall not however reap the full harvest of glory. We believe that the whole world is flooded with blessings, and that the stream rolls broad and clear from the hill-foot of Calvary, and laves the feet alike of the godly and of the ungodly, the thankful and the thankless. But from the riven side of Christ there comes forth one stream — the river of life whose banks are trodden only by the feet of the multitude of believers, who wash and are clean, who drink and live for evermore. We speak tonight of Christ's death in its various relations, so as to touch upon and include sundry things which cannot be properly classed under the title of particular redemption; but we feel we are driven to this course, so as to be able to do justice to ourselves and to our leading theme.

Now, we have three sets of truths before us, and these three sets of truths we must deal with. (1.) We have, first of all, a God holy and righteous, loving and gracious, a God who has been most grievously wronged and injured, and a God who must be honored alike by the giving him all the glory of which he has been robbed, and by the bearing of his just expression of holy indignation at the wrong that has been done unto him. We have a God jealous in the extreme, and yet, strange enough, declaring that he passes by iniquity and forgiveth transgression and sin. We have a God truthful, who has sworn "that the soul that sinneth it shall die," and who yet speaks to those souls, and says, "Turn ye, turn ye; for why will ye die." A God whom we know must be just, and must execute upon the ungodly that which they have justly merited, and who yet strangely says,

“Come and let us plead together, and though your sins be as scarlet I will make them as wool, and though they be red like crimson I will make them white as snow” “That is one set of truths — strange, and apparently contradictory. Then we have another. (2.) We have a world lost, and yet swathed in an atmosphere of mercy. We have a world dark with the darkness of death, and yet everywhere we find it more or less under the influences of the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, which came a light unto darkness, that did not and could not comprehend it. And we have, moreover, a world rebellious, and serving another matter than the right one, and yet nevertheless beneath the feet of him who has been made Head over all things for his body’s sake, which is the Church. (3.) And then, once more, we have a Church peculiar in its unmerited privileges, chosen from before all time to inherit the kingdom given to it before the world began — a kingdom that can never be trodden upon save by the spotless and the deathless, and yet the inheritors are by nature dead in trespasses and in sins — list, ruined — without a God and without a hope in the world. How are all those strange and apparently contradictory things to be solved? One clue, we find, is in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. The work involves its ultimate end, which is redemption, and of that work we are about to speak to her to-night.

We speak first of those blessings which come from the death of Christ, and are for all men, the whole world is under a mediatorial government, the whole spirit of which is a government of long-suffering, graciousness, tenderness, and mercy, such as could not have been exercised had Christ never died. A government there might have been, but it must be, we think, a government akin to that which is found in the place where those are found who make their bed in hell. We find, moreover, that the direct and indirect influences of the Cross

of Christ have pervaded the world, and none can tell how full of its gentle spirit has come like oil upon the troubled waters; or what man, with his wild passions, would have been without the ameliorating influence of the Cross. We possibly may be able to tell, when we look across the impassable gulf into a Gehenna beneath, and see sin unchecked working out its dire results and, we believe that whatever comes short of that darkness, whose very light is darkness, is due to that light which radiates from the Cross of Christ, and whatever is short of hell streams from Calvary. And then, further still, we have a Bible, a revelation filled with the love and mercy of God to man — a Bible in which our Lord himself could show, beginning at Moses, and in all the prophets, that which did testify concerning himself; and, apart from Jesus Christ and his death, there could have been no such revelation of God's character unto the human race. A revelation there might have been, but it would have been a revelation of Sinai's horrors and terrors, without even the spark of hope which comes forth from that dispensation there set forth. There might have been a revelation, I say, but it would have been a revelation that would not have wound up as this does with a blessing. It would have ended like the Old Testament with a curse; it would have begun with the same. It would have been worse than Ezekiel's roll of woes, which is filled all over with terrible lamentation, and with awful sorrow and woe. And again, there is a positive overture of mercy, a true and faithful declaration of good tidings unto every creature, and we *do* believe that it is our duty to preach the Gospel unto every creature, and the Gospel runs thus — "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, for he who believeth and is baptized shall be saved." That overture we hold to be no mockery, but made in good faith, and that overture is not the overture of a shadow. But the presentation of solid, substantial blessings; and for the rejection of that, not

God, but man is answerable, and for the rejection of that he will be lost. “For this is the condemnation, that they have not believed on him whom God hath sent.” And, then, lastly, we find that as the purchase of the death of Christ there is a Church and that Church is sent forth into the world with orders to bless it and to do good unto all men. It is bidden to go forth as a light in the midst of darkness; it is bidden so to live as to be the salt of the whole earth. Now, we say that each one of these blessings is no small gift from God to man — no mean result of the death of our Master; and, combined, we think they would form a bond worthy of a God, and, as we put our hand upon it, we think we can give full and true expression, and with an emphasis surpassed by none to that glorious text — “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son;” And we think, upon our system, and upon ours alone, we can give full truthfulness and emphasis to the remainder — “That whosoever believeth in him shall have everlasting life.” Now, upon redemption proper, the latter part of our theme, we will pass on to speak. And, first, what do we mean by redemption? Most certainly we do not mean the POSSIBILITY OF REDEMPTION, for we have learned to distinguish between the possibility of a thing and a thing itself. We feel this, that we do not preach and cannot preach, gathering our teaching from the Bible, a possibility of redemption. We proclaim a redemption. Nor do we mean by redemption a contingency of redemption, which, again, is contingent upon a third thing. We have learned to distinguish between a contingency and a certainty. We proclaim a certain redemption, and we speak of that which is not possible but positive, not contingent but certain. Neither do we mean by redemption such an outgrowth of the man’s own power or goodness as shall enable him to burst his way through every bondage and to get forth free; such an elevation of human nature, whether by the education of

others, or by his own works, as to enable him at last to stand free. If we meant that, we should use the word escape, but not the word redemption. And again, if we meant, as some, alas! have seemed to mean, God's waiving his claim upon man, God's waiving man's liabilities, and God's giving up that which are believe, as a holy God, he cannot surrender; if we meant that, we should speak of emancipation — of pure pardon and forgiveness but we do not.

We mean redemption. And then, gain, we do not mean by redemption the meeting of the debts, either in prospective or in the present. We do not mean that the man shall either in the present or in the future, bear any part of the penalty, and, by some goodness, either in the present or foreseen, satisfy God's claim upon him. If we meant that, I think we should use altogether another word than the word redemption. What do we mean by redemption? We mean, by redemption, the work one being which is done for another, but generally a helpless one, in order to give him perfect freedom. And when we speak of redemption, mark you, ere speak of a thing that is the result of that work. We distinguish between redemption and redemption work. What we mean, by redemption, is just this — the grand result and end of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ; and we could as well speak of redemption apart from the redeemed, as we could speak of life apart from a living creature. Life and living creatures are co-extensive, and so is redemption and the redeemed. If you take down any book that will give you an explanation of the word "redemption," I think you will find three things, put therein. It is a ransom, a rescue, and a release. Now, I take the whole three words to be the fullness of the meaning of our one word. It is such a ransom, and such a rescue, as result in a complete and full release. Whatever stops short of that thing, is, of course, not the thing itself; the thing itself that we mean, is the positively being

redeemed and made free. Now, just by way of simplifying the subject, let me speak of the Redeemer, and of the redemption work, and of those who are redeemed.

First, the Redeemer, who is he? We believe him to be the Word that was with God, equal unto God, and was God, — who became flesh and dwelt amongst us. At the same time, the flesh did not become, in any sense, Deity, neither did the Deity, in any sense, become carnal. They formed another person and that person the God-man, Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. Now, what is he? And here I just ask that question, in order to meet some objections, and, if I can, to put on one side two or three theories that seem to fight against ours. I hear a voice, saying, in reply to that question, what is he? Why he is God's idea of humanity he is God, who has taken up humanity from its fallen state, raised it up not only to the place where he first put it, but, beyond, even to the height to which he hoped it would ascend, or possibly something beyond it. And, now, from henceforth, such is the union betwixt common humanity, that the lost, in their degradation, have but to look to their common humanity exalted, realize their identity with it, and to feel themselves, by that deed, raised to the same standard and redeemed and free for evermore. To which we reply, there is enough of truth in that lie to keep it alive, and that is all. We do believe that our Master did lay hold of humanity; we do believe that he is the most perfect man that ever was; we do believe that he has honored and dignified the human race, by taking that upon men, and by becoming flesh like unto ourselves. But we cannot see how that the gazing upon that can open blind eyes, unstop deaf ears, give life to the dead, and procure the discharge of our sins any more than we can see how that the gazing upon an Olympic game could give to the physically lame, physical strength, or could give to those who were physically dead, life from their physical death.

And, again I hear other voices replying to that question. They say, “he is the great example of self-denial, and of the submission of the human will to the Divine. And what redemption is, is this — that man now can look to that great display of self-denial, can catch of its spirit, and can imitate it, and by that deed of subjection making the will to succumb to the will of the Divine, they may, at least, emancipate themselves, and go forth free “To which we reply, once more, there is enough of truth in that just to cement the error together, and to give it a plausible appearance to the sons of need, but there is nothing more. It is true that our Savior was the Sent One of the Father. It is true, he came, saying, “Lo! I come to do thy will.” He declares he was not doing his own will, but the will of him that sent him.

And he winds up by saying, “Not my will, but thine be done.” But, after all, we cannot, and dare not accept that submission of Christ’s will to the Father, as being a satisfaction for sin; neither can we see, how, by the imitation of that, we can, in any sense, wipe away the sins of the past, or free ourselves from the penalty that is yet to come.

But now to answer for ourselves. What our Lord Jesus Christ? And we say, that in life he is the great example and copy, in death, he is the substitute; and in both, the federal head — the elder brother and kinsman of his Church.

But now time warns me that I must pass on to the second thought — the work of redemption. First of all, we gaze at that part of the work which is Godward, and that we call atonement, and, when you ask me — What is the character of the atonement? I reply — It has a twofold nature, to correspond with the twofold character of sin. Sin is a transgression of the law, and a consequent insult to him who is the lawmaker. But it is something more than that: the power by which he has transgressed has been perverted, it was given to him to obey

the law that he might glorify God. And to make, therefore, satisfaction for sin, there must be a bringing to the law obedience; there must be the bearing of the sanction because of the disobedience; there must be the rendering to God the glory due to him, and there must be the bearing of his just displeasure and the expression of his holy wrath and indignation. That Christ has done: he came and his whole life was obedience to the law, for he was obedient even unto death and in that death, he bore the sanction of the law — for he was made a curse, it being written, “Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” His whole life was spent to glorify God, and at its close he could say, “I have glorified thee, and I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do,” and his death was the bearing of the just displeasure of God towards the sinner, and in the agony of his heart he cried, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” In these things we behold, therefore the presentation of the obedience due, the giving to God the glory due, the bearing of God’s displeasure, and the enduring of the curse of the law. And now the question would be put to me as to the value of atonement. We believe that its value depends not so much upon the Being appeased, nor upon the beings to be atoned for, as upon the Being who makes the atonement. The value of Christ’s atonement is the value of himself. He gave himself for us. If he had stood as the surety of but one soul, he could not have been less than himself; if he stood as a surety for the whole world, he could not be more. He gave himself; what more could he bestow? The value of the atonement is the value of our Lord Jesus Christ. In his flesh, he can take man’s place, and by his Divinity he can give, and must give anyhow, an infinite value for the work that he, in mortal flesh, performs. For one soul, therefore, it must be infinite — for more or less it cannot be. Infinite it is, and infinite it must be, and we have a part or parcel with those who would say,

that if Judas was to have been saved, Judas' amount of agony would have had to have been borne by Christ, and Judas' amount of penalty would have had to have been paid, in addition to what has been borne and paid by Christ. He took the place, the room, and stead of the church, and then all that he was worth went in that church's place and stead. More he could not do, if he had taken the place of the whole world. But, you ask me, is there any limit to the atonement at all? I say I think there is, and the limit seems to be, not in the value, but in the purpose. The limit seems to be this theory — for *whom* did he die? in whose place and stead did he stand? If he stood in the place and stead of the whole world, then he made atonement for the sins of the whole world, and the whole world will be saved. If he stood in the place and stead of his Church, then he made atonement for his Church, and the whole Church will be saved.

We believe that Christ took the place and stead of every believer, that the believers sin was put on him, and thus the sinner can go forth free. But I hear a voice saying, "I challenge substitution, and I object to that." So be it. I ask you, did Christ die for sin at all? It must be answered, — Yes.

Then for whose sin did he die? If his own, then he suffered righteously. Did he die for the sins of the whole world? then justice cannot demand this again. Did he die for part of the sins of the whole world? then the rest of the sins will still condemn the world; then must have Christ died in vain. We believe that he took all the sins of some men. It was not a fictitious condemnation; it was not a fancy sin made for the occasion, it was a positive sin that had been committed by God's people, and is transferred from them to him who laid down his life for his sheep; loving us, and giving himself for and in the stead or in the place of his people.

But, then, we say this work of redemption comprised something more than thus paying down the ransom, and the bearing of the penalty. It is, moreover, a rescue; for sin has not only made men thus to have insulted God and broken God's law, it has transferred them unto bondage under the allegiance of one — "the strong man armed." They must be freed from that. Christ came, has destroyed death, and through death him also who has the power of death, even the devil, making an open show of them upon his cross, ascending up on high a victor, leading captivity captive. And then, I think, there is yet something further. Sin has affected the man himself, made him to need in his own person a releasing from the dominion, Power, and corruption of sin. This Christ has secured by his covenant with the Father. But that which I take to comprise effectual calling and final perseverance, I shall leave to my brethren who shall speak afterwards. And now as to the persons redeemed — who are they? The Church, we say, whether you look at the Church as elect from all eternity, or the Church believing in time, or the Church as glorified hereafter. We look at them all as one, and we say these are the redeemed, these are they for whom redemption has been procured. We cannot add to their number, we cannot diminish them; for we believe that those whom God foreknow, he did predestinate; that those whom he did predestinate, he also called: for whom he calls he justifies, for whom he justifies he also glorifies; the whole are one, — and for these redemption has been made.

Now, if I may be permitted the time, I will just touch upon one or two objections, and then I will conclude. I hear someone saying, "But by that, sir, you surely must limit God's love." I reply, is God loving when he punishes any and doth not save all? Then is he loving also when he purposes to do that, for whatever justifies the deed justifies the purpose which gives the morality to the deed. And then I hear another objections —

“How can you, sir, upon that theory, go to preach the Gospel unto every creature?” You have heard that answered — we have got the order; but, I reply yet further: I could not go and preach the Gospel upon any other theory, for I dare not go on that fool’s errand of preaching a redemption that might not redeem, and declaring a salvation that might not save. I could not go and say to a man, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” And he would ask me, “Do you think you are going to heaven?” “Yes.” “Why?” “Because Christ died for me.” “But he died for us all, and my chances therefore are as good as yours.” And he might reply to me after he had accepted my declaration, and after he had believed, and begun to rejoice, after all he might say, Is there any real reason why I should rejoice, some for whom Christ died are in hell, and I may also go there. I cannot begin to rejoice in your news till I feel myself in glory. It is rather a faulty piece of good news, because it is nothing positive it is a grand uncertainty you have proclaimed to me.” Now, what we preach, is the Gospel to every creature, and that we take to be this — If you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ you shall be saved, if you do not, you will be lost, and lost forever. You are not redeemed — you are not saved, — there is not, in another word, salvation and redemption for you. Because I cannot say that there is salvation and redemption for those who are lost forever.

But we add, “We are what we are by Divine grace; we have believed, if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ you will be as we are — will be able to boast as we do, humbly in the Lord our God;” or in other words — If you believe, and are baptized, you will be saved; if you do not believe, you will be lost, and lost forever.

EFFECTUAL CALLING

A Sermon
BY THE REV. JAMES SMITH
of Cheltenham

My Christian friends, our minds have been occupied to-day with some of the loftiest subjects that can engage the thoughts of man. Our attention has been directed to the infinitely wise and true God, and we have been endeavoring to conceive of him as the great, the infinite, the eternal; the great, the infinite, the eternal intellect, who, of himself, conceiveth the grandest schemes, and infallibly provides for their accomplishment, so that there can be no mistake, no failure. We know that every wise intellect forms its plan before it provides its means, or attempts to carry out the idea conceived in the mind.

And the great doctrine of election, to which our attention was directed this afternoon, answers to the formation of the plan in the infinite mind of God. He foresaw, clearly, that the whole human race, represented by the first man, would fall into sin, and left to themselves, would certainly perish. To prevent a catastrophe so fearful, he determined in his infinite mind, to have a people for himself, a people that would comprise the vast majority of the fallen inhabitants of this world; were all present before his mind their names were registered in his book, which book was delivered into the hands of the Lamb, the Son of God, who accepted the book at the hands of his Father, and, as it were, signed it with his own name, so that it has been designated, "The Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." And Jesus looked upon this act as the committing of the people to himself, on purpose that he might take the charge of them, on purpose that he might carry

out the Father's will respecting them, and gain eternal laurels and honors to himself, by placing them in splendor, majesty, and glory before his Father's face forever. We therefore find him frequently when speaking with his Father, and referring to this act in the eternal counsels, saying, "Thine they were and thou gavest them me. Keep those whom thou hast given me by thine own name, that they may be one as we are." But election interferes not with man as standing in Adam, but with man as under sin, the result of Adam's fall. It ensured their restoration, but it did not interfere with their fall, and consequently the elect, with the rest, all fell in the first man. The entire mass of human nature became depraved, polluted rotten to the hearths core; so depraved, so polluted, so rotten, that nothing could effect a change but the omnipotent energy of the omnipotent God. There is that in depravity in every form, that defies the touch of any one but the Infinite; that refuses to succumb to anything but to Omnipotence itself the heart of man is foul as the heart of Satan; the nature of man is foul as the nature of Satan; and the sin of man is worse than the sin of Satan. Satan, the great archangel, that fell from heaven, did a tremendous deed when he set mind in opposition to Deity; but man set not merely mind, but matter with mind in opposition to the eternal God. God could once look upon the world and say, "Though mind is in rebellion, matter is not in opposition," but after the fall of man, mind and matter alike were corrupt, were depraved, were in opposition to the Eternal. Every man's heart steams with enmity against God, every man's spirit rises in rebellion against God; and, as you have heard to-night the verdict of every man's conscience in its fallen state is, 'No God no God,' and if the Eternal could be voted out of existence by the suffrages of his fallen creatures, every hand would be up, every heart would give its verdict, and every voice would vote for the annihilation of the Most High. The will of man strong, the will of man sterns,

the will of man determined, and opposed to the will of God, will yield to nothing but that which is superior to itself; it laughs at authority, it turns with disgust from holiness, it refuses to listen to invitation, and, in this state, man — universal man, is found. In this state, man, the entire mass of man, with the exception of those who had been saved on credit, and had been changed by the sacred influences of the Spirit — in this state man was found when Christ came into our world. He came and, as ye have heard, assumed humanity, and united it with Deity.

The two natures constituted the one person of the glorious Mediator; that glorious Mediator stood the representative of his people; that Mediator stood the Surety of his family, that Mediator stood the Substitute of the multitude of his fallen ones. That Mediator came to be the sacrifice to which sin was to be transferred, by which sin was to be expiated and removed out of the way, that God's mercy might freely flow, and from the sinner's conscience, that he might have peace and joy.

But as the election of the Father did not interfere with the falling of man's nature, so the redemption of the Son did not change the nature that had fallen. It was therefore necessary, that as the Father sent the Son, the Son should send the Comforter; and as it required an infinite victim to atone for man's guilt, it required an infinite agent to change man's fallen nature. As to the Father, the atonement must be made as the moral governor, as the maintainer of the rights of the eternal throne, so from the Father, through the Son, must the Holy Spirit descend to renew, to transform, to remodel, to fit human nature to gaze upon the unveiled glories of Deity, and to render to God the homage due unto his name. And this just brings me to my point — EFFECTUAL CALLING. This implies, that there is a calling that may not be effectual. Yes, there is a call that extends to the whole human family. As it is written, "Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is unto the sons of men."

There is a call that refers to humanity as sinful, and to sinners as such, however fallen and depraved they may be. Repentance or a change of mind, repentance and remission of sins, are to be preached amongst all nations, and the disciples were to begin at Jerusalem; and, beginning at Jerusalem the slaughter-house of the Son of God, and the slaughter-house of the prophets, and of the saints, — beginning there, they said, “Repent and he converted, that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.” But the people were like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear, and refuseth to hear the voice of the charmer — charm he never so wisely. The Baptist had come and cried, “Repent,” and sternly and impressively he preached, but they paid little regard, — at least, little regard that tended to life. And the Son of God, with all that was soft and winning, and captivating, came and preached; but they turned away, and he said, “To whom shall I liken the men of this generation — they are like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling to their fellows — We have piped unto you, but we have not danced, and we have mourned unto you, but ye have not lamented.’ Now, this call must be given, because God commands it; this call must be given, because God works by it. In airing the general, the universal call to all that hear the gospel, we obey the high mandate of the Eternal Goal; we do honor and homage to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we employ an instrument — a weapon, if you please — by which the Spirit of God operates upon the human mind; for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but are mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds, and the casting down of imaginations, and every high thing, and the bringing into subjection every thought to the obedience of Christ.

The general call leads to the special, to the particular, or what we designate, the “effectual call.” We speak to men as

men, and we reason with them; we speak to sinners as sinners, and we expostulate with them; but while we reason, and while we expostulate, we have the promise of the presence of the Master — “I am with you;” we have the promised presence of the Eternal Paraclete, who was sent to empower, sent to accompany, and sent to work by the Lord’s servants; and, while we speak and give the call as we are commanded and commissioned, the Holy Spirit works, — the infinite power of the Eternal Spirit comes into contact, — direct, immediate contact, with the mind of man. There is a power that goes with the word — distinct from the word — when it is accompanied by the energy of the Eternal Spirit; and that power produces in the heart, life — a spiritual, a Divine, an immortal life — a life that man dead in sin had not; a life which a man once having loseth not, for it is eternal; a life that was given us in Christ before the world was, a life preserved for us by Christ all through the past Ages that have rolled away, a life that is communicated from the loving heart of Him who is the great depository of grace, and conducted by the Holy Ghost into the heart that is called by grace. Has the Spirit accompanying the word produced life? from that life springs conviction: not the cold conviction awakened occasionally in the mind of man, by the reasoning of man, by reflecting upon his past misconduct, or by the flashing of the forked lightings of the law, but a conviction that is produced by the Holy Spirit bringing the law into contact with the conscience — the Gospel into contact with the heart. In the sinner’s conscience God erects a tribunal, in the sinner’s conscience God sits as judge, and to the tribunal, before the just judge, man is summoned to appear, and in the heart, in the soul, in the nature of man, there is a miniature of the judgment that is to take place at the completion and winding up of the present dispensation. The man is arraigned as a sinner, the man is convicted as a culprit, the man is

condemned as a criminal, he stands before God, and he has nothing to say; every excuse has withered like the leaves of autumn, every excuse is carried away like the chaff from the summer's threshing-floor, every rag that the man boasted of is torn from him, and he stands, a naked sinner, before a heart-searching God. The penetrating eye of the Omniscient darts into the innermost recesses of his soul and the gentle fingers of the Spirit turns over one fold of the heart after the other, the process may be long, or the operation may be quick, but sooner or later the man is brought to this. — "In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." He had once started at the Scriptural representation of man's fallen and depraved nature, he had once wondered that from the lip of truth had proceeded the startling words. "From within, out of the heart, proceed murders, adulteries, blasphemies, false witnesses, and abominable idolatries." He never could have thought that evil so dreadful, he never could have thought he cast his eye back, there are the crimes of his life; if he cast his eye forward, there is the tremendous judgment; if he lift up his eyes to Heaven, there is the pure and holy God that he has insulted; and if he turn his eyes within, all is dark and vain and wild. He is filled with alarm — alarm that perhaps keeps him awake by night, and haunts and harasses him by day, until he is prepared to do anything, prepared to go anywhere, if he may but escape the just judgment of his God. He is by this discipline prepared to submit to God's method of salvation; he is prepared to give up proposing conditions according to which he would be saved; he no longer goes about to work out a righteousness of his own, but he is ready to submit himself to the righteousness of God. Being, therefore, conscious of his criminality, burdened with his guilt, trembling at the prospect of his destiny, he falls prostrate before the high throne of the Eternal, smites upon his breast, and cries "God be merciful to me a sinner," as if no

such a sinner had ever appealed to God's mercy, as if no such culprit had ever stood before God's throne; before God he says, "If there can be mercy in thy heart sufficient to reach a case so dismal and so desperate, God be merciful to me," and after having pleaded with earnestness, after having supplicated with intense emotion, and after having, perhaps, become a little bold, he is startled at his own temerity, and receding, as it were from the position that he had taken, he cries —

"Depth of mercy, can there be
Mercy in thy heart for me,
O God of spotless purity?"

And, perhaps, like David, he groans in his heart, and mourns in his soul, until his bones wax old, through his roaring all the day long but, no relief, no help is found, until, at length, he begins to make confession of his sin, and, as he confesses, the Spirit of God unveils and unfolds the gospel mystery, and, as in the days of the law, when the victim was brought to the Priest, and the man placed his hand upon its head, between its horns, and pressed with his might, and confessed over it all his transgressions, all his iniquities, and all his sins, so the man lays his hand of faith upon the victim's head, and there confesses his sin. As he confesses, a change takes place in his feelings, the burden begins to move from his conscience; the dark cloud that hovered over him begins to disperse a little; bright light in the cloud attracts his attention, and, as he looks upward he seems to catch the loving Father's eye, and feels an encouragement within him to approach unto God; and, as he approaches, still confessing, still pleading, still deploring, still resting his hand upon the victim's head, and trusting in the atonement you have heard of; and on that alone, he seems to hear strange music, a delightful melody, and that music is the commencement of the

sound of the trump of the Jubilee, when the oppressed one is to go free, and as he listens to the sound the chains drop from his hands, and the burden from his shoulders, the trouble is removed from his heart, and he tilts up his eyes, streaming perhaps with tears, to heaven, and says, 'Oh Lord, I will praise thee, for though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me;" and looking around, on those about him, in the language of wonder, astonishment and gratitude, he says, "Behold, behold a mystery, behold a miracle, behold one of the greatest wonders in the universe; behold, God is my salvation. I will trust, and not be afraid, for Jah Jehovah is my strength, and my song, he also is become my salvation." He has now peace flowing into his heart like a river, he has now a consciousness that God has accepted him in the beloved, and he now experimentally knows the truth, tastes the sweetness, and feels the power of the apostolic testimony, "Being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access into this grace, wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." He has now experienced the effectual call. It has been a call from darkness into marvelous light, from bondage into glorious liberty; out of prison the man comes to reign; from the dunghill, he is lifted up to sit among the princes, even among the princes of God's people. And, now, as I must conclude, just observe, the origin of this call is the free, the sovereign, the distinguishing grace of God. It originates, not in man's will, nor in man's disposition, nor in man's station in society, but of His will, and of His will alone, who is the great sovereign ruler of the universe, is this change effected; of man it *cannot* be, for it includes a new creation; a resurrection; and the inhabitation of God. Generally speaking, the instrumentality by which God works is the gospel, but in every instance the agent that produces the change is the holy and eternal Spirit of God. He

quickens the soul dead in trespasses and sins, he enlightens the understanding that was in the midnight darkness of nature he disposes the will which before ran counter to the will of God; he teaches the understanding that was once averse to everything pure and holy, and then gently, and lovingly, and sweetly he leads the soul to the Cross to gaze upon the wondrous Sufferer, he then leads the soul to the Church to confess Christ and him crucified and then leads it in the paths of righteousness for his own name's sake. The calling is high, for it is from the High and Holy One; it is heavenly, in contrast with the earthly calling of the descendants of Abraham of old; it is an evidence of distinguishing love; and thanks, eternal thanks to God, it is irreversible, for the gifts and the calling of God are without repentance.

From death to life we pass; from darkness into light we come; out of bondage into liberty we spring; from sin to the knowledge and enjoyment of holiness we are introduced; then at last from earth to heaven. Into the grace of Christ, we are called, and we stand in his favor. Into the fellowship of Christ, we are called and in communion with him we live. To be glorified with Christ we are called, and when Christ who is our life shall appear, we also shall appear with him in glory. The Father draws, the Spirit quickens, the Son receives, and when locked in the arms of the Son of God, our effectual calling is realized and enjoyed. Its author, is God; its subjects, are the elect, its nature, is holy, and its end, is glorious. Thus, you perceive, my friends, all originated in God's thought, which thought sprung into the perfect plan to carry out which plan provision was made, and this plan will be perfectly carried out to the praise of the glory of his grace. Thus, whether you think of election, whether you think of redemption, or whether you think of effectual calling

“Give all the glory to his holy name,
For to him all the glory belongs;
Be your’s the high joy still to sound forth his praise
And crown him in each of your songs.”

The Rev. C. H. SPURGEON. — I think it was John Newton, who, speaking about good Calvinistic doctrine compared it to lumps of sugar, but he said, he did not so slouch give to his people the lumps of sugar, as diffuse the whole of it throughout his sermons; just as people do not eat sugar, but put it in their tea. Now, come of you have not yet grown patient enough to listen, I think, to a doctrine, however fully it may be brought out. Our people want anecdotes, illustrations, parables, and metaphors; even the best and sublimest things keep our minds on such a stretch when we listen to them, that there is good need that illustrations should yield us some relief. To-day was set apart that these doctrines might be fully brought out; this has been done, and there remains but one, and that my friend Mr.

O’Neil is to take, namely, the final perseverance of the saints. Before he speaks, just one or two words. Has it never struck you that the scheme of doctrine which is called Calvinistic has much to say concerning God? It commences and ends with the Divine One. The angel of that system stands like Uriel in the sun; it dwells with God; he begins, he carries on, he perfects; it is for his glory and for his honor. Father, Son, and Spirit co- working, the whole Gospel scheme is carried out. Perhaps there may be this defect in our theology; we may perhaps too much forget man. I think that is a very small fault, compared with the fault of the opposite system, which begins with man, and all but ends with him. Man is a creature; how ought God to deal with him? That is the question some theologians seem to answer. The way we put it is — God is the

Creator, he has a right to do as he wills; he is Sovereign, there is no law above him, he has a right to make and to unmake, and when man hath sinned, he has a right to save or to destroy. If he can save, and yet not impair his justice, heaven shall ring with songs; if he destroy, and yet his goodness be not marred, then hell itself with its deep bass of misery, shall swell the mighty rollings of his glorious praise. We hold that God should be most prominent in all our teaching, and we hold this to be a gauge by which to test the soundness of ministers. If they exalt God and sheik the sinner to the very dust, it is all well but if they lower the prerogatives of Deity, if he be less sovereign, less just, or less loving than the Scripture reveals him to be, and if man be puffed up with that fond notion that he is anything better than an unclean thing then such theology is utterly unsound. Salvation is of the Lord, and let the Lord alone be glorified.

THE FINAL PERSEVERANCE OF BELIEVERS IN CHRIST JESUS

A Sermon

BY THE REV. WILLIAM O'NEILL

Minister of New Broad Street Chapel, London

My dear Brethren and Friends.

Most unexpectedly did the kind invitation of my esteemed brother, Mr. Spurgeon, come to me, to take part in the present service of this beautiful house. And after I had engaged to come I sincerely wished that I had not. I felt, however, that it would not be proper to retire from the engagement, but seek to meet it in a becoming spirit, both towards God's truth and God's

people. I will now try to do this. I utter here, of course, my own sentiments. As I am not responsible for anything that has been or may be said by another speaker, so I alone am responsible for what I shall say. But though I am not the delegate or representative of any church, denomination, or community, I doubt not that my declaration of faith on the matter in hand will be, in all substantial points, that of a very large number who love Jesus and are living in His service. That I desire to believe what the Bible teaches, and that I am sincere in my convictions, I *know* to be true: but that there are thousands of excellent Christians on the other side admits of no doubt, and should not be questioned by any one. Of their deep sincerity, love to God and his Gospel, zeal and devotedness in holy things, self-denying labors in the Divine service, and the cultivation and manifestation of Christian graces, I would and do speak with the most earnest approval I give them as much credit for sincerity as I claim for myself; and I do this not as a favor, but as a piece of simple justice. Yet we differ — differ as to what the Sacred Oracles teach on the doctrine now before us, and it is competent and right for all men to examine, each one for himself, which of our opinions is that which is taught in the Bible, for certainly both are not taught there.

The question — Is it possible for sincere Christians, truly regenerated persons, to be finally separated from Jesus, to lose the favor of God their Father, and be eternally shut out from His smile and Home? — is one of no small moment. It involves issues of the most momentous nature, and cannot but be unspeakably interesting to every believer in Christ. We say, with unfaltering tongue, that of all the dead, everyone who was ever renewed in heart is now in heaven; and that reconciliation with God on earth, through Christ Jesus, will, in every case, end in the everlasting salvation of the soul. Did God, then, tell us that all who are here now are His regenerated people, (would that

they were!) we should believe that when the roll of the finally saved shall be called, every one of them would answer to that call by saying, “Here am I, Lord: Thy right arm, and the effectual operation of Thy Spirit and grace has done it all, and now I am to be forever happy, forever sinless, forever safe.” It is hardly necessary to say, that we believe this view of the case to be in entire harmony with the teaching of God’s Book. To the law and to the testimony, if we, or others, speak not on this and on all other matters according to that Word, it is because there is no light in us or in them. (Isaiah 8:20.)

Having called public attention to this doctrine lately in a small book, “UNCHANGING LOVE.” Tresidder, Ave Maria Lane, London. All the texts that are usually quoted in opposition to the doctrine now noticed are passed under calm review. in which I have sought to obey the Master’s command, — “Search the scriptures,” — I will now, with your kind permission, direct attention to a few portions of the Divine Word that, we believe, fully establish the doctrine of the saints’ final preservation and perseverance. On each of those texts my words must be few, as the time allotted to me is short.

Hear then the Holy Spirit’s teaching when speaking by the prophet Samuel: “For the LORD will not forsake His people for His great name’s sake; because it hath pleased the Lord to make you His people.” (1 Samuel 12:22.) This, we think, is conclusive. What Christian does not know, and knowing, does not mourn over, the untrustworthiness of his own heart? And feeling fully assured that it is impossible for him to vanquish “the world, the flesh, and the devil,” how welcome to his heart is the declaration, “The LORD will not forsake His people.” No; He thought proper to renew their hearts, to quicken them into spiritual life, and He will mercifully continue to carry on His good work in their souls till it shall be perfected in glory. The reason why “He will not forsake His people” is stated here

most explicitly; just as much so as is the declaration of His unchangeable love. It is not that they were less sinful by nature or practice than others; or because of any moral qualities that were found in them; but “because it pleased the Lord to make them His people.” Hear another portion: God, speaking by his prophet Isaiah, says, — “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands.” (Isaiah 49:15, 16.) This we regard as a most interesting as well as a most consolatory portion of Scripture. “Zion said, the LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.” This was not only an error in creed, — it was also a dishonorable estimate of the Divine character, and to it the Gracious One replies in these words: — “Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee.” The affection of a right-minded mother for her tender and helpless offspring is one of the strongest that is experienced by human beings. But, though strong, very strong, it may, alas give way. It is, at best, only a creature’s love, and therefore changeable; while that love which is exercised by God towards His believing children is, like Himself, unchangeable. These words prove, and were designed to prove, most conclusively, that the love of the Divine Father towards His adopted sons and daughters is not a fluctuating or changing thing. What other, or what lower interpretation can we put upon the words, “YET WILL NOT I FORGET THEE? And not forgetting them is, in this case, equivalent to His continuing to care for, to keep, and tenderly regard them.

Hear God again speaking by the same prophet: — “For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a

moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wrath with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee.” These words deserve to hold a prominent place among those which God has spoken for the comfort and joy of His people. Their obvious design is to sustain believers under the chastening hand of God, and to do this by considerations drawn from His own character, and not from anything in themselves. Vain, brethren, is it to trust, or put confidence in our own false hearts. They are weak as helpless infancy. To lean on them will only be evidence of our folly and of our sin. We are not to find consolation in our gifts, in our graces, in our labors, in our resolutions, or in our experience, nor by the grace of God will we do so but when chastised by the ever-loving and good Father, — when smarting under his parental and deserved stripes, — we may feast our souls on His blessed words — words that fire those souls with confidence, hope, and love. — “In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee.” For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee.” Such, brethren, are GOD’S utterances! These are the words of One who is unchangeable in affection; of One who says, — Oh! blessed be his adorable name for that saying, — “For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” (Malachi 3:6.)

I name another passage: — “For there shall arise,” says Jesus, “false Christ, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch, that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.” (Matthew 24:24.) The plain and obvious meaning of this latter clause is, that it is not possible to deceive, or allure to their final ruin, the adopted sons and daughters of God, those whom He has chosen to be His. Nothing less, we believe, was intended by the Gracious Speaker, and we see not how any other meaning can be consistently given to the language which He here uses. The words, “If it were possible,” only say, in another form, “*It is not possible.*”

I now name such texts as connect faith, or believing in Christ, with salvation, of which the following are a few: — “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.” “And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on Me hath everlasting life. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread he shall live forever.” “The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth.” (John 3:16, 5:24, 6:47, 50, 51, 57; Romans 1:16.) The plain teaching of these, and many similar passages, is, that every believer in Jesus *hath* everlasting life. They teach this or they teach nothing. If this be not their meaning, what is? But, can that which is everlasting cease to be? Can it come to an end? No words can more plainly assert than these do, that *whosoever* believeth in Jesus **SHARE NOT COME INTO CONDEMNATION**; that all believers in him shall enjoy

“everlasting life.” We take these gracious assurances as proving, to the fullest extent, the doctrine for which we plead. If the belief of the Gospel be not followed, in every instance, by eternal blessedness, what did Paul mean when he said, “The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to *everyone* that believeth?” (Romans 1:16.) If, at the last day, a single one be unsaved of those who had believed the Gospel, who had been united to Christ by faith in His name — the apostle’s words must needs be falsified — his teaching is not true. This, at least, is our opinion. No amount of adverse criticism can set aside the evidence that such verses as these furnish in support of the blessed doctrine which we now defend.

Hear Christ again: — “My sheep,” he says, “hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of My hand. My Father who gave them Me is greater than all, and no one is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand.” We regard this entire passage as one of the most delightful and consoling in the Scriptures. It teaches most unequivocally, — in the plainest, strongest, and most conclusive terms, — that Christ’s believing ones “**SHALL NEVER PERISH**” — that no enemy, human or hellish, shall be able to wrench them out of His or His Father’s covenanted and secure grasp. Infinite power, no less than infinite love — both existing in their God and Savior — stand guarantee for their security. Neither men nor demons shall be able to defeat or overturn the purpose of Divine grace concerning them! Difficulties, many and sharp, may surround them, and temptations, fierce and fiery, may assault their souls, but Divine love, wisdom, grace, and power shall be ever on their side. Jesus, the “faithful and true witness,” says, “**THEY SHAKE NEVER PERISH.**” Elsewhere He says, “Because I live, ye shall live also.” (John 14:17.) The spiritual life of believers is in HIS keeping,

and He here declares that it is as secure as His own. If He dies, and continues not to be their “advocate with the Father,” (1 John 2:1) their Intercessor “at the right hand of God,” (Romans 8:34) then may they die also, but not otherwise. In perfect keeping with his Lord’s words are those which Paul uses, when referring to the same subject. “For if,” he says, “when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” (Romans 5:10.) That is, we shall be preserved in that state of reconciliation by Christ’s intercessory life at God’s right hand in heaven. He, the God-man, lives there as Mediator, for them: He holds and exercises “all power in heaven and on earth” for the welfare and safety of His church. And they cannot die while He lives. The power that is to destroy the spiritual life of the weakest saint must first destroy the life of that saint’s Head. “Their life” as the Holy Spirit by Paul elsewhere teaches, “is hid with Christ in God.” (Colossians 3:3). Where, brethren, could it be safer, or as safe? In whose care or keeping could it be so secure? It is hid with Christ in God.” Not only so, but the Apostle goes on to say, “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him IN GLORY. “This, to say the least of it, is a glorious statement and declaration. Can language, we ask, go beyond that which is used in these texts to guarantee the eternal salvation of every believer in Jesus? The Head and members shall never be separated. They are bound up in an inseparable and an unchanging union.

Hear a Divine lesson given in another place: — “Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified, and whom He justified, them He also glorified” (Romans 8:30).

When it is said, “Whom He did predestinate, them He also called,” we must interpret the word “called” to mean very much

more than *invited*, for the Apostle goes no to say, “Whom He called, them He also justified.” We know that this is only true of those who believe in Jesus — who are effectually called or drawn, by the combined operations of the Word and Spirit of God, into the blessed fellowship and joys of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 1:9). That those, and only those, who *believe* in Christ are justified, is the uniform lesson of the Divine Word (John 3:16, 36; Acts 13:39, 40; Romans 1:16, 3:22, 28). Let it be noted that Paul affirms three things here. The first is — “Whom He did predestinate, them He also called.” The second is — “Whom He called, them He also justified.” And the third is — “Whom He justified, them He also glorified.” What, then, does he mean by the expression “glorified?” Does he, or can he mean anything less than the enjoyment of everlasting life? We say, then, that were only a single individual out of the whole number of those who have been, or shall be “justified” by faith in Jesus, to come short of heaven, the declaration would not be true that “Whom He justified, them He also glorified.”

Hear another Divine proclamation relative to the security of God's people: “For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38, 39).

These brethren, are notes of the most triumphant character, relative to the ultimate blessedness of believers in Jesus. The terms which are here used are such as leave no doubt as to what the Holy Spirit, speaking by Paul, meant to teach. We deliberately affirm that language has no power to assert the doctrine for which we contend more conclusively than is here done. Words have no meaning, nor are they of any use in communicating thought, if these words were not used by a man who believed as we do on the matter in hand. And we are

entirely willing to believe or disbelieve with the Apostle Paul, neither more nor less.

I quote him again. Hear what he wrote to the Church at Philippi: — “Being confident of this very thing, that I who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” I well remember how greatly this passage strengthened my own soul when, in the morning of my religious life, I was passing through much mental conflict. And are not these words well calculated to comfort the hearts of those who, through grace, have believed in the Savior? Is there any room for objecting criticism here, or is there any ambiguity in the language employed? No, there is none whatever: the Apostle was confident of this very thing. What “very thing?” Why, that wherever the Divine Spirit had commenced this “good work” of grace in the soul, He would complete it. No other power could have begun it, and no other power is competent to carry it forward to completion. That He who commences that “good work” is *able* to finish it, no professing Christian *will* deny: that He *will* finish it, this verse most clearly teaches.

The Apostle Paul was “confident of THIS VERY THING;” and so are we.

Let us give attention to other words of the same sacred penman. Addressing one of the primitive Churches he says: — “We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” (2 Thessalonians 2:13). This is a most important portion of Scripture in relation to the question — What is the end of election? In what does it, or is it to terminate? What does it secure? Are its subjects merely chosen to enjoy the light of the gospel, the means of grace, and no more? Or, are they chosen to enjoy, in its full measure, everlasting life, the priceless favor and blissful fellowship of God here and forever?

This question is definitely settled by the language of inspiration employed here. The Apostle declares that the choice is “to salvation;” or, in other words, which he also uses in this place, “to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This means, of course, eternal life in heaven, as well as all that precedes and prepares for it on earth. But how can this be realized? How can it be said, they were “chosen to *salvation*,” if they may all apostatize finally from Jesus, fall out of the Divine favor, and be forever numbered with the lost? The thing is, of course, impossible. If not *saved*, — fully and forever, — it would not be true to say they were chosen “to salvation.”

I beg to name one passage more. Speaking of believers, a divinely inspired teacher says: — “Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation” (1 Peter 1:5). Here we are distinctly taught what the Divine Being is doing and will continue to do for His believing people. The Apostle asserts, that they are “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.” If so, nothing is more certain than that they shall reach it, and enjoy it forever. Had Peter believed that it was possible for any number of them to become outcasts from God, and die in their sins, he would never have employed the language which is found here. The declaration that believers are “kept” or garrisoned in (for such is the meaning of the term here employed) “by the power of GOD through faith unto salvation,” settles the point with us, and leaves us nothing more to desire in the shape of statement or promise. This is, indeed, a glorious declaration. Fellow pilgrims, let it fill you with the highest joy, as it gives you the fullest assurance that you are safe in the grasp and guardianship of Jehovah of hosts.

We hold and teach too, that the certain enjoyment of everlasting life, inseparably connected with continued faith in the Divine testimony concerning sin, Jesus, and His salvation. They shall be preserved in the exercise of faith in the Redeemer,

until they shall enter upon the possession of the heavenly inheritance. This is clearly taught here, and nothing less.

I have now referred to a few out of the many portions of God's word which teach the doctrine for which we contend. God's people shall be preserved, and will persevere to the end, for they were given to Christ in the everlasting covenant, that covenant which is "ordered in all things and sure:" the stability of which is as safe as the oath, and promise, and power of God can make it (Psalm lxxxix. 30, 34; Hebrews 6:18, 19). They are "loved by Him with an everlasting love" (Jeremiah 31:3); they are "chosen to salvation" (Ephesians 1:4; 2 Thes. 2:13); and God, their gracious and reconciled Father, "will rest in His love" (Zephaniah 3:17). Their safety, as believers in Jesus, is secured by the word and promise of the "God that cannot lie." He has said that He will "never leave them nor forsake them" (Hebrews 13:2); that they shall never perish" (John 10:28); and that He will "confirm them unto the end" (1 Corinthians 1:8).

For this purpose, the ever-availing intercession of Jesus is employed. He is at the right hand of God as their Brother, Representative, and Advocate. If he prays for them that their faith fail not (Luke 22:32). They are, each and all, borne on His heart and pleaded for in His gracious and ever-successful intercession. "Father," says he, "I will that they also, whom thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory" (John 17:24). Oh, what priceless joy do these words afford to the believer's heart! No weapon that is formed against them shall prosper. Their Almighty King will vanquish all their spiritual foes. He will so aid them that they shall contend victoriously against "the world, the flesh, and the devil." They shall be more than conquerors through Him that loved them (Romans 8:37). They shall be the saved of His right arm, and the everlasting monuments and trophies of His grace, love, and power. They are "sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise

which is *the earnest* of their inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession” (2 Corinthians 1:21, 22; Ephesians 1:13,14). Having received the “earnest,” the pledge which guarantees the fulfillment of their Heavenly Father’s covenant to save them, they are perfectly and forever secure.

We build our faith in this doctrine on God’s plain teaching. We extort no meaning from His word which cannot be found there by the simple and ordinary reader of it. We take its statements in their plain grammatical sense, just as they would be interpreted by any unprejudiced expounder of language. We should be content to abide by the interpretation of them which would be given by any man, infidel or other, who felt no interest in our controversy, and who was entirely careless relative to our differences of opinion. One unequivocal passage teaching this doctrine would be, or should be sufficient to establish it, and to bring out opinions into harmony with Divine teaching; but we are not confined to one, or five, or ten; we have line upon line, promise upon promise, assurance upon assurance, and declaration upon declaration to this effect, so that we would fain ask, — If the doctrine be not taught in the portions of Scripture that I have named, what is taught in them? What is their import? What do they teach? Or, what language or terms would be thought sufficient to teach it? It is our firm conviction that no doctrine of religion is more clearly taught in the Bible than is this. It is expressed as plainly as words can possibly do it.

And are we, with these inspired declarations before us, to suppose it possible for wicked men or demons to say, when pointing to numbers of the lost, — “The Most High began to build up His kingdom in their souls, but He was not able to finish it! He quickened them into spiritual life, — renewed, pardoned, justified, and sanctified them; but now they are torn from His grasp, His enemies *were* able — contrary to the words

of Jesus (1 John 10:21) — ‘to pluck them out of His hand,’ *and they have done it.*”

This would, indeed, make short work of many plain and positive declarations found in the Bible: it would prove, beyond doubt, that its promises, and assurances, and declarations are of very little value.

Let me, before I close, say — and say with the fullest emphasis possible — that we believe as firmly as any man living, as firmly as we believe any truth taught in the Bible, that “without holiness no man shall see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14). We know no other evidence of being in Christ, or of being a Christian, than that which is furnished by a life and behavior becoming the Gospel. And though holiness is not the cause of God’s first or continued love to His people, it is the effect and fruit of that love, and a main part of the salvation which is in Christ Jesus — that salvation to which they are chosen (Ephesians 1:4) and he who is satisfying himself with the notion that he is safe for eternity, while he is living in any known sin, is turning the grace of our God into licentiousness, and is a deadly enemy of the Cross of Christ. The blessed doctrine which the Bible teaches, and in which we glory, is — the doctrine of the *saint’s* final perseverance, and that doctrine was never designed to comfort any man who is not living a life of faith in the Son of God, intensely anxious to please God in all things, and to be the holy and happy subject of that mind which was in Jesus.

Very interesting, then, is the question, when asked in no wrong spirit — Are there few that be saved? If God does not hold up His people, if He does not keep them by His grace and power, they will be very few indeed — a child may count them, and, in fact, have none, not one, to count. But let no man charge our views with being “narrow” or “embracing only a few,” or contemplating the eternal salvation of “a very limited

number” of our race, for, according to the view which we hold and teach, they will be a numberless number. We believe, and our hearts swell with high and holy joy in believing, that *every* child of man who loved God, — *every one* of Adam’s race who was renewed in heart, — *all* who were ever on the Lord’s side, — will be found among the saved. Not one will be lost. Not one will be missed from the eternal banquet. Not one will be outside the gates of the holy city, All, all shall be there, and there forever, and ever, and ever!

“The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,
He will not, He cannot, give up to His foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
He’ll never! no, never! no, never forsake!”

389 (AND 390) NONCONFORMITY

A Sermon
Delivered on Friday Evening, April 12th, 1861,
by
HENRY VINCENT, ESQ.
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

*General Sir John Burgoyne, Bart., G. C. B.,
in the Chair*

SIR JOHN BURGOYNE, on taking the Chair, said: Ladies and gentlemen. It is extremely gratifying to be aware that every preceding meeting, whether spiritual or in the shape of bazaar or lecture, that has been held for the promotion of this great undertaking, has, by the exertions and energies, and able management of Mr. Spurgeon and his supporters, met with complete success. I would willingly hope that this, which I understand is to be the last meeting, may not be an except first is now my duty to introduce to you Mr. Vincent, a gentleman, whose acknowledged talent and power of employing it will be sure to give you a most instructive and interesting lecture. For my own part, in performing this task, I feel that I am acting the part of the bell at the railway statism, that is about to announce the approaching departure of a train. The train in this case will be a train of reasoning that will lead you along the path to knowledge. As Mr. Vincent will have to deal with matters of social and political, as well as spiritual import, let us hope that no collision of opinions may interrupt our progress in the right path. Mr. Vincent will now have the honor of addressing you.

Mr. VINCENT. I confess that I am moved by an unusual emotion, as I stand in the presence of this vast assembly: for the occasion is one that awakens our piety and our gratitude, as we contrast the present with the past, and remember through what a cloud of martyrs and confessors we have marched to the full enjoyment. Of that spiritual social, and civil freedom, which makes us, under God, the foremost people of the earth. But to-night we have no time for apology or compliment. We are Nonconformists. We belong to that illustrious band whose history in storm and in sunshine is the history of evangelic piety, of earnest and continuous conflicts with error and oppression; of many martyrdoms, of not a few reverses, but of constant triumphs and great and growing victories. And it is fitting, that in these inaugural services, in the noblest temple ever raised lay Nonconformist zeal, we should bear aloft the standard of our Nonconformist principles, and strive by God's grace and help, to raise each other to more earnest labor in the work of evangelizing the people, and of training the population of this country in a deep and undying faith in those great principles of spiritual freedom, of social progress, and political liberty, in the defense of which, our forefathers suffered, that they might will for us the glorious privileges we now enjoy.

And first let me say that Nonconformity need not be presented to the churches in a sectarian aspect, or in a sectarian spirit; for if we find ourselves back upon the earliest illustrations of its life and its power, do we not find it with more or less distinctness, affirming the spiritual character of the gospel of Jesus Christ? Do we not find it contending that the church of Christ is a spiritual organization to be sustained by Divine grace and power? its instrumentalities to be persuasion, preaching, faith, prayer, — those great instrumentalities appointed by God for the work of this world's evangelization; so that, in the very outset, I candidly declare, that, though I

belong to the Nonconformist body, I do not come here in any spirit of antagonism to the religious life and Church of England. All who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, all who believe in the free circulation of the Scriptures, all who understand that the kingdom that is not of this world should neither be petted, patronized, or upheld by the civil power — all who know that the Church of Christ should be an evangelizing institution, freed from the trammels of unjust laws, and sanctifying by her presence the great cause of freedom, are Nonconformists, to whatever sect they may belong.

Now of course it is difficult in a single address in which I desire to show the identification of Nonconformity with the growth and safety of our religious privileges, its identification also with the progress of freedom, the security of our constitutional throne, and the real liberties of the people of England, for me to enter into anything like a detailed description of the causes that first produced this peculiar manifestation of religious and ecclesiastical activity in these nations. Suffice, then, to say that, while it may be contended that long before the arrival of the great Augustine and his splendid band of monks, Christianity had been preached in this country, and innumerable churches had been founded, churches that with more or less fidelity proclaimed the unsearchable riches of Christ — yet to-night I desire to say that, partly through the influence of heathenisms, partly through the influence of that stupendous ecclesiastical polity that grew up in the city of Rome, the English churches by degrees became corrupt, the English churches by degrees became enslaved by priestcraft or by superstition, and though, perhaps, some churchman might dispute with me the first position that I take, I desire respectfully to maintain that those early Christians, after the establishment of the Roman Catholic Church in these islands, who contended against the superstitions of Rome, who

contended against the ecclesiastical despotism of the Romish See, from men like Grostete, Bishop of Lincoln, down to immortal Wickliffe, who has been termed, not unaptly, the “morning star of the Reformation;” — these men were all Nonconformists, because they refused to, obey the arbitrary power of man, and defended against tyranny the everlasting truths of God.

It is also obvious that a patient reading of the earlier conflicts of those who are denominated Protestants, commencing if you will with John Wickliffe, and remembering the teachings of that spiritually-enlightened priest remembering that he rose at a time when the Holy Scriptures were not in general circulation, when they had not been translated into the common vulgar tongue: remembering that he contended that the Scriptures were the only perfect rule of faith and conduct; remembering that he contended that a church consisteth mainly of faithful men; remembering that he protested against some of the sacraments of the Romish Church, that he protested against the corruptions of the Romish clergy — the pride, the pomp, the wealth of the hierarchy remembering that he aided in the sending forth of that body of evangelizing priests who, like the Puritans of an after age, went from city to city, and from town to town, to proclaim that religion is, and ever must be, a personal matter between a man and his Maker — preaching the necessity for a divine regeneration in the soul, and then, with an independence and courage worthy of the highest praise, translating the New Testament from the original monkish Latin into the common English tongue, and laying the foundation for the power to read, and the power to think, and the power to preach — he must be regarded not only as the morning star of the Preformations but as the father of true Nonconformity in its battle for civil and religious freedom.

History teaches us that the Christian people, enkindled into life and zeal by the teachings of Wickliffe and his followers, constituted themselves under various shades of difference as the evangelizing and religious portions of the population of this country. History tells us that they were dealt with, first by the priesthood, and then by the civil power as heretics, as seditious and traitorous people, dissatisfied with the Church, dissatisfied with the government of their country; and though of course it is not to be denied that some of them held strong views in favor of Episcopacy, that some of them still clung to dogmas that modern Protestants believe to be heretical and dangerous; though many of them had but imperfect views of what Christianity really is, yet they one and all endured a common scorn, or suffered a common martyrdom, not in defense of Episcopal supremacy, not in defense of ecclesiastical injustice, but in defense of that great right that you and I enjoy this night, — the right of worshipping God freely, according to our own conscience, a right which these dear and holy mill and women purchased for us at the expense of their property, their liberty, and their lives.

We come, then, by a steady and irresistible progress, to the time when the Papal Church in this country was shaken in its hold upon piety and learning; we come to a time when statesmen adopted the policy that we now find popular upon the continent of Europe. Statesmen felt that the claims of the Papal chair, exercised as those claims were in a most intolerant way over weak princes, weak magistrates, and weak parliaments — statesmen discovered that the security of the kingdom, the independence of the crown, and the supremacy of the civil laws, were incompatible with the exercise in these islands of a foreign ecclesiastical government; so that there arose in England a two-fold power, — first, a spiritual protest against the religious corruptions of Rome and secondly, a political

protest, such a protest as you find now entered by the Empire of France; for you may take my word for it, that France, in the presence of the present corruptions in Italy, is precisely in the same condition that England was in the reign of Henry VIII., and we are close upon a combat that will put down forever the temporal power of the Pope in France and Italy.

Now we come, then, to the reign of Henry the Eighth, when, after many serious martyrdoms, there arose a stronger repugnance to the priesthood, and a greater restiveness under ecclesiastical restraint, despite the power of the court and the power, moreover, of the priesthood itself — and this restiveness rendered a great change in our ecclesiastical institutions an absolute necessity. I am not about to sketch the life of the Eighth Henry, except to say that it is very remarkable that precisely at that period when Martin Luther — everlasting honor to the glorious monk! — had blown the trumpet of his great revolt in the German States — it is very remarkable that Henry VIII., of all princes, should have stepped into the intellectual arena to engage Luther, to dispute with him on the dogmas of the Papacy, to write that famous treatise, *The Defence of the Seven Sacraments*, in which he attempted to prove that Martin Luther was wrong, and that the Papacy was absolutely right. It is very remarkable, I say, that this prince, partly through personal intrigue, partly through the political complications of the time, partly through the criminality of his own passions, should have been an agent in the destruction of the external power of that Papal polity. And though I am far from being an admirer of that bluff and burly king, I nevertheless regard the heavy blow dealt at that time by the short, sharp, cutting Act of Parliament, which declared that henceforth the Pope of Rome should exercise no legal jurisdiction within this kingdom of England, — I regard that glorious blow at Papal supremacy as the great important step towards civil and religious freedom —

for all history declares that Popery will slay liberty, if liberty does not destroy Popery.

But now we notice one of those painful facts that occur constantly in the history of the Church of Christ. The revolution was accomplished, but the external revolution affected only the external government of the Church and the external laws of the kingdom. The spiritual portion of the people looked on with joy as they saw the papal power driven back, but they soon found that under the new institution, there still existed the old leaven: for it is one thing to change the laws of a country, and another thing to change the character of the people; and the great work always is to change the people first if you can, for there can be no permanent change in legislation unless it springs from the moral and intellectual growth of the people themselves. Attempts were made, therefore, to enforce in the new institution conformity to moderate Protestant and moderate Catholic opinions. You had, as it were, a compromise, and I am not about to condemn the statesmen who made this compromise, I have no doubt they acted as discreetly as they could, for the times were critical, the people were ignorant and superstitious and the change depended more upon the court, the statesmen, and the parliament, than upon the great body of the English population, but still the fact is none the less a fact, that the great church that arose, containing much piety, much worth, much learning, contained within its own bosom discordant elements, partly Papal, partly Protestant, and was expensed to attacks from two extremes, — the Catholics assailed it on the one side, the ultra-Protestants murmured on the other, and the great institution osculated according to the predominance of certain sentiments in the court, and the legislature osculated now towards Papacy, and now towards Protestantism, but ever and anon resorting to unjust, oppressive, and persecuting acts, sometimes against the

Catholics, and sometimes against those who were afterwards termed Puritans, until there dawned upon the minds of a few Christian people that oppression, whether under the name of Protestantism, or under the name of Popery, must be opposed by earnest Christian men, if they would found churches as they ought to be founded — freed from the oppressive domination of states, and purged from the corruption of pomp and of wealth. To me it is evident that the men and the women who suffered on the Protestant side though they were attached to Episcopacy when they died at the stake, thought less of Episcopacy than they did of the gospel. They did not die for Prelacy; Prelacy has never had a martyr yet, — never! They never died for Prelacy, and it is untrue to say that they died for Prelacy: they died for the gospel of Jesus, and when tied to the stake and tempted by the fiends who bound them with the offer of life, and honor and glory, if they would recant, they kissed the stake with fervor, and exclaimed in the presence of excited crowds, “None but Christ; none, none, but Christ!” And it is obvious that though some might have preferred Episcopacy to Presbyterianism, or to Independency, yet they constitute a portion of that army of noble and devoted, and pious men and women, who laid the foundation for our Nonconformity in all its piety and its power.

Now, the Reformation, obstructed for a time, breaks out with renewed effulgence! in the brief reign of Edward VI. You find then what Protestantism had been doing. Men complain occasionally when town missions are in operation, or when foreign missions are working, that no fruits from their labors immediately appear. God works in his own way. Man sows the seed and exerts himself under the divine guidance to the utmost of his strength, and his power; and in God's own time, the fruits of this holy seed appear. The destruction of the Papal influence, the break up of monastic institutions, those great nests of vice

and idleness, the break up of those institutions, the bringing into the market the lands of the old religious houses, the replenishing of the fortunes of many of the aristocracy — those fortunes that had been dissipated by the wars of the Penises; the change in the notions of men were not absolutely Christian, — for you can never measure all that the Church of Christ does, if you limit your view to the direct religious action of the churches. There is an influence of a moral kind, there is an influence of a social kind, there is an influence of a political kind that extends beyond the area of the churches as they exist and, in the reigns of the Sixth Edward, which may be denominated the reign of intelligence, brief though that reign was, you not only saw the protestant party more powerful though it disfigured itself by one of two cruel and oppressive acts, but you saw England burst out into a love of learning: men and women began to leave property to found schools, schools in which the children of the middle classes should receive an education that would put them upon a par with the children of the gentry. This was the era of the free grammar schools. Your own Metropolitan school, the Bluecoat School, rose in that brief reign, and the boys carry to-day on their lone blue coats the bright buttons of Edward VI. Scholarship was now about to enter into a conflict with priestism: I know that nothing can destroy sin, and that nothing can destroy priestism, but the triumph of Divine grace in the soul of a man; but still I believe in the power of human logic, I believe in the power of argument to tear frauds and falsehood to tatters; I believe in the universal instruction of the youth of a country, a youth made proudly aware of the glory of living under a free constitution, a youth trampling in the power of the Divine spirit, religious error beneath their feet, and walking with their heads amid the stars, glorifying in the power of science, and ennobling in their lives the value of mental culture.

The period, then, of Edward VI.'s reign is another blow; it is as it were a leap forwards in the direction of a wider mind, as well as a stronger basis on which to build our civil and religious liberties. And it pleased God that this growth should be no ephemeral growth. How strange it is that the growth of the individual is generally through much suffering and many tears! I believe in the baptism of sorrow as well as the baptism of joy, I believe in the power of pain, in the sanctifying influences of tears; and some of the most devout Christians have struggled through a cloud of darkness, have been torn within by contending passions, and have been brought up out of much tribulation — brands plucked from the burning; enduring monuments of the almighty grace and power of God.

England, in her national life, has passed through precisely the same phases. We advance upon the dark reign of Queen Mary. We need not attempt to revive the passions that once swept over the country like a storm, as the memory of those sad days haunted the public imagination; and yet it is none the less true, that the tremendous reaction that then set in, might have succeeded had there been no other people in the country than time-serving men, who were ready to confer to whatever was established. For remember in the change that took place, large numbers of the indifferent clergy conformed at once, large numbers of the indifferent clergy, and oh! those indifferent people! You can do anything with a man if he opposes you but a man who says to you, "Well, sir, I do not care much about it, sir, my motto is this 'Anything for a quiet life.'" People of this kind conformed at once; they would have conformed to anything. If you were to put up Mahomedanism to-morrow, a great many respectable people would say, "Well, it is the established religion, and are you to oppose the laws of your own country?" For they seem to me to be constantly blinded on the question of duty, as though whatever was set up,

whether it was a golden calf or not, humanity is bound to bow low. But, blessed be God, this may be the language of time-servers, but it is not the language of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. All the Church produced men and women who confronted the powers of darkness and oppression in vindication of the gospel; and will you tell me that that cloud of women and men who went to the stake in the county of Kent, in the county of Essex, in this great metropolis, that holy band of men and women who went to the stake at Gloucester, at Oxford, at Coventry, at Derby — from one end of England to the other, numbering upwards of four hundred persons, many of them beneficed clergymen — and will you tell us that they died for Episcopacy? No, they died for the Gospel, and they were Nonconformists! When they died, they refused to conform to the established order of things; and mind you, I do not want to flatter dissent. There have been as many good Nonconformists in the Church as out of it, and you have found that those Nonconformists in the Church, and then the Nonconformists out of the Church have saved religion and liberty and have been the glory of the country in which we have the happiness to dwell.

The reign, then, of Mary is the reign of Martyrdom, but it is a reign that makes mends principles of some value. It is the easiest thing in the world to swim with the stream, but duty called the Nonconformists to row against it; and I rejoice to know that the church and congregation worshipping in this magnificent temple have for a minister a man who is not only a devout Christian, but an earnest Nonconformist, a believer in the great traditions that have come down from that age of blood — those grand traditions that have made us what we are, and to which I desire, in my humble address, to direct your attention to-night.

We come then to the reign of Elizabeth — “Good Queen Bess.” Sturdy woman! If I am to be mis-ruled, let me be

governed by a woman. I would submit with much more grace and much more ease. I do not wish to detract from the character of that splendid woman — strong, with massive sense — I should only like to say I should not have liked such a lady for my wife. But she was a woman of great strength, of noble purpose, loved her country, was proud of her queenship, would govern not only the State, but the Church, and on a memorable occasion, though there is a law about women ruling in the Church — she ruled though — she declared pretty firmly, when a bishop was rather restive on a certain occasion, “My lord,” she said, speaking with great emphasis, for she was a lady of striking language, “My Lord,” she said, “I would have you know that *I* made you what you are, and if you do not obey me, I will unfrock you.” Thereupon, the worthy bishop, I have no doubt, was obedient enough, and bowed down before her. A grand reign, but a reign in which, Protestant though the Church was, this awkward question of supremacy came up; for in the days of Queen Mary, devout people fled the country to foreign cities — scattered bands of Christians — and settled at Frankfort-on-the-Main, Strasburg and other Continental cities, and though they were Episcopalians when they left, they could not take their bishops with them — it was a great misfortune — and having left them, they learned to do without them — which was another great misfortune. They were, however, quite astonished after living at Strasburg, Frankfort, and the other cities for a short time, they were quite astonished that they enjoyed the means of grace, that their prayer-meetings were vigorous, and that God was graciously present in their simple meetings. These truths had dawned upon a few: they now dawned upon more. They could not be all of one mind.

Some people want us all to be of one mind. There is only one mind in religion, the mind of the Holy Spirit within us. But in non-essentials, there is plenty of room for diversity of

judgment. In the knotty question of Church government, some pebble like Prelacy, some Independency, some one form, some another, some Presbyterian. Let all the people enjoy the form of Church government that they believe to be right, only let them pay for it themselves. Ah, if a friend of mine were here, I know what he would say, "Yes," he would say, "you hear these people applaud." It is all very well for these people to applaud, for they know how to give money, and they know how to build temples like these. "But he would remind me of an occasion in which a bishop preached a charity sermon, and my friend would say to me, "You know, Mr. Vincent, your voluntary principle is all very well, but it will not do for everybody; I held the plate at the door, and although the bishop had preached, the richest man in the parish only put in a shilling." Well, I can only say, that can be paralleled by some Dissenters, who, if they have to give, always fumble in their pockets until they find a threepenny-piece; and I have heard provincial ministers mourn over the threepenny-pieces; and in the small provincial towns, there is a party known by the name of the "threepenny-piece party." So that it is utterly impossible to find fault with any particular sect. And we can only say this, that there is room for diversity of judgment, there is good and bad everywhere, and all that we say is that the element that stood up in Elizabeth's days was the same element that stood up in the days of Mary. Back came the exiles from Geneva, and dressed in all kinds of dresses.

Now it never troubles me how a minister dresses. If he has any peculiar love for a gown, let him get into it, if he has not a love for a gown let him get out of it. It does not trouble me whether he is well dressed or badly dressed I think far more of his doctrine than I do of his dress, and far more of his life than I do of his appearance. Well, airs, the exiles came back religiously rejoicing under the rule of good Queen Bess. Some

of them when restored to their pulpits, went in their academic Geneva scarves, and looked very odd; some of them went in with the old surplice; some of them went in with an old coat — a very old coat; exiles were not very likely to get rich; conformists were more likely to have good coats. You have, then, an attempt made to enforce unity in apparel. Strange to any, uniformity at first, was not attempted in doctrine, but in apparel. There came out the act of uniformity, an act that offended the conscientious scruples, and that revived the old division. The Church severed again, not openly; but still the division was discernible to all intelligent minds. There were men like Whittingham, Dean of Durham, there were men of great distinction, one or two prelates, clergymen of high scholarship and unmistakable piety, who protested against the act of uniformity; and inasmuch as they had continued to carry out the freedom they had acquired in the foreign states, there came out Her Majesty's orders prescribing how the clergy should dress, and thus description was quaint enough. It described their gossellers' their hoods, and their copes, and the long gowns and short gowns, and their tippetts of sarcenet; and the country divided on a strong controversy that was called in those days the gown and surplice question. One of the clergymen, the Dean of Durham, was cited for refusing to wear what he rudely called "the priest's rags." But you must forgive these men; they lived closely to the fires of Smithfield, and the scent was still in their noses, and therefore they did not like anything that symbolized the past. They became new men, not defending absolute liberty, but they contended for toleration as opposed to compulsion, but your compulsory party is never satisfied. When it has the power it exercises it, and when it has not the power it does not, and it hopes you will be very grateful for the concession that it makes. The worthy Bishop of London at that time cited the curates of the metropolis before him in

Lambeth Palace. There was a great gathering among them. Fox the martyrologist — he was among them. If you want to bend the little people you should always begin with the strong; for when you have broken the neck of the strong the weak are easily managed. There was an examination of the curates as to whether they would conform to the queen's orders, and sign the queen's declaration concerning dress. Fox was the first one addressed by the bishop's officer. The venerable preacher stood forward; he drew a Greek Testament from his pocket, held it up, and said, "To this I will conform, and to nothing else; and when they reminded him that he would lose all chance of preferment — that is a delicate matter — he said, "Well, I have only a prebend in Salisbury; and if you take that from me, much good may it do you." In the midst of the excitement a door opened, there was a pedestal on the floor of the palace, and there entered from the door the Revelation Mr. Cole — it is not always that these gentlemen's names are preserved — the Revelation Mr. Cole, he was dressed in full canonicals, in the thoroughly orthodox way. He was ordered to stand up on this pedestal, and he stood up, the terrified curates — sixty- seven of them — looking at him in astonishment. He reminds me of one of those dummies in the front of a tailor's shop, "In this style, for 10s. 6d." While he was thus standing, the bishop's chancellor stepped forward and said, "Ye godly ministers of London, the Queen's council's pleasure is, that ye strictly keep the unity of apparel, like this godly gentleman that stands here. Ye who will subscribe write '*Volo*,' ye who will not subscribe write '*Nolo*.' Come, come, come; be quick, be quick; not a word; not a word." Thirty or forty of the curates, to their everlasting honor, buttoned their goats and walked out, though they knew at what expense they did do. Who were the men who walked out? Nonconformists! and we have the authority of the bishops for saying that among them were some of the most godly, pious,

and learned ministers of the Church of England, and to the credit of the assembly a very smart minority signed the declaration they were requested to sign. If you read with care you will observe that in the reign of Queen Elizabeth there is the distinct existence of a Puritan party in the Church, more or less Nonconforming, and there is the commencement of separatism, though in a very small degree, in certain district of England. It is Nonconformity again contending for the purity of the Gospel, for freedom in non-essentials, for that same freedom that was to be fought out with greater zeal in the reign that was to come. Elizabeth passed away; her reign was glorious intellectually, hers was a court filled by wits, orators, and statesmen while the great outburst of literary life and beauty attests that the country had sprung up from the lethargy of its old life into the light and beauty, of a higher cultivation, a more refined taste, and a nobler scholarship — while in and out of the church the Nonconformist element was growing either consciously or unconsciously in the direction of a broader and more solid liberty.

We come now to the reign of James I. — “Scotch Jamie.” James I. was a Presbyterian in Scotland, and as he mounted the English throne, public opinion oscillated. The Catholics said, “He will never forgive the men who killed his own mother.” Presbyterians said, “He has been so well taught in Scotland that he is sure to incline towards us.” England had grown by that time. The Separatists beyond the walls of the Church were forming themselves into Presbyterian congregations. The great leader of Presbyterianism in Elizabeth’s days was Cartwright, who had graduated in the University of Cambridge. He was now preceded by Dr. Reynolds, a man eminent for his piety and learning. There were also, I believe, a few scattered congregations of Baptists and Independents, unimportant in numbers, but earnest in principles. The king was no sooner on

the throne than he allied himself heartily with the Prelatic party, because the Nonconformist elect, strengthened by the Scotch power, was now confronting the varied despotisms that still continued to disgrace our Protestant faith. The king invited a conference at Hampton Court. I need not describe it; it is a link in the chain, though, of this Nonconformist history. Several of the prelates were there; Dr. Reynolds and a few Puritans were there. The king brow-beat the Puritans; insulted them; told them that he who sought to introduce a Scotch Presbytery into England was a man not to be tolerated. He turned towards the Puritans and said, "I'll harrow you out of the Lord, or I'll do worse." The reign of James was inaugurated with a strong and oppressive policy, and from this time, assaults were made with remorseless vigor upon Presbyterianism, and upon those who began to propound Independent and Baptist sentiments. It was then that the scholarship of the country began to debate the question of the Constitution, for the English Constitution enjoys this advantage, that all its ancient traditions — those sustained by common law — are all in favor of common right; and the Puritan party, leaving the Hampton Court Conference, began to say, "How is it that we are constantly subjected to fines imprisonment, banishment, or death?" — and the answer came to them, "Because you are not faithful as citizens; because you do not understand that though you should not mingle up your church-government with the policy of the crown, or the pokey of the parliament, it is your duty as citizens to see that the laws do not transgress the limits within which they are entitled to act: that the laws of England are intended to protect all men in the honest exercise of their religious opinions. The scholars, taking this ground on scholarship alone, attracted the attention of the more earnest Christians, and these earnest Christians said, "These scholars speak wisely, for the Scriptures of truth give to us the light to worship God according he the

dictates of our own conscience,” so that under the current there welled up partly from the Universities, partly from the Lords and Commons, partly from the Presbyterian and Dissenting Meeting-houses, partly from the Nonconforming body in the Church — there welled up these grand ideas, that the Parliament of England, consisting of Crown, Lords, and Commons, ought not to be an oppressive body, and that every man who was loyal to the crown, and obeyed the laws, ought to enjoy perfect liberty with every other man is the kingdom. It was then that the Court party and the Prelatic party felt their danger, and they struck hands. Prelacy said to the Crown, “Believe in the right divine of bishops,” and the Crown said, “I do:” and the Crown said to the Prelates, “Believe in the right divine of kings;” and the Prelates said, “We do.” The unity was struck between them, and now, on the benches of the courtiers, in the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge, and in the printed books of the Prelatic party, the strongest perversions of Scripture took place. “Wilt thou not be afraid of the power of the king? as by divine law, whatever the king wills must be obeyed.” Scholarship said, “The common law knows nothing of divine right. Edward the Confessor, whose old laws are constantly quoted, did not reign by divine right, but by virtue of the common laws and customs of his kingdom.” And then the Puritan leaders, one by one—they did not all see the light at once — lifted up the New Testament, and began to confront, on Christian grounds, the maxims of despotism, and I venture to say, my Christian friends, that when Christian men took this ground, they slew the power of despotism, and laid the foundation for the liberties we now enjoy. They contended that the right divine was in freedom, they contended that the king might not oppress the churches, they contended against the maxims of despotism, they contended valiantly through that persecution drove away hundreds of them to the wilds of

Virginia, in that sturdy bond of Pilgrim Fathers who laid the foundation for the better portion of the American Republic; they contended through the corrupt policy of the court, when the court was a stew, when the king was acting the buffoon, when statesmen were nursing the most atrocious vices, they still contended against despotism. They defied the folly of the *Book of Sports*. They disbelieved in witchcraft which the king believed in; they would neither follow him in his crime, his folly, nor his injustice; and when James I. died, the Nonconformists of England, in spite of persecution and sorrow, were a strong power entering into closer companionship with constitutional principles and with scholarship, preparing to take the grand stand that they took in the reign of Charles I., a stand which proclaimed that despotism in this country is not immortal, and threat those who put their trust in God shall never be confounded.

The reign of Charles I. consummates the first great political conflict of this Nonconformist history. I have no time to enter into the details of that weir; suffice it to say, that the foolish policy of Jones was continued. It was still the right Divine of Kings, it was still the audacity of Prelacy, and, there arose to confront it, scholars like Selden, like Coke, hard-hearted Coke — old Coke upon Lyttleton, one of the keenest lawyers of his age. There arose to confront it, John Pym, John Hampden; there arose to confront it Sir Harry Vane; there arose to confront it, the Presbyterian and the Baptist, and the Independent leaders, fill by this time, the Baptist and Independent churches had multiplied in numbers; and after a long and painful struggle, in which the nation witnessed at times the imprisonment of Christians, the closing of their churches, the levying of taxes contrary to law, the forcible dissolution of parliament, the raising of monies by way of was — the nation ultimately saw at the beginning of 1629, the

dissolution of the Houses of Lords and Commons, and from 1629 till 1639 the jails were full of the noblest, the most pious and learned of the population; churches were closed by violence; among them that grand old Bristol church, the Broadmede church, associated with Baptist history. London suffered intensely in that time: noble men stood in the pillory, Bastwick, Leyton, and Burton; Prynne, and others, had their ears cut off, their noses slit, their cheeks branded with red-hot letters; hundreds fled to America. It was an age of persecution and despotism, until in 1629, the parliament was revived, but dissolved in three weeks. In 1640, it met again as that “Long Parliament,” described by Macauley as “the Parliament containing the greatest geniuses for government the world ever saw.” The great body of the members were Episcopalians, but they were Nonconforming Episcopalians, they believed in Episcopacy, but they believed that Episcopacy meant the lights of the clergy and the rights of the laity as well as the rights of the prelates. A few Presbyterians were there, and a few Independents and Baptists. Among the independents was that man, defamed for two hundred years, but who nevertheless stands out as the noblest product of his age — Oliver Cromwell, sitting there now for the university town of Cambridge, having formerly represented his native town of Huntingdon, you know the issue. Prelacy had gone mad, but Prelacy was now to be banished by Episcopalians. Parliament restored the due action of the law, swept out of the law-books the ill-fated decision of the King’s Bench against John Hampden in the case of the ship-money — liberated Pym, Burton, and Bastwick, from their long imprisonment, fined their judges, and finally when the bishops became more unpopular, and there was a cry against them, — the bishops finding they could not get peaceably to their places in the House of Lords, petitioned the king to take care of them; the king said he had enough to do to take care of

himself, and that if they had any grievance to complain of, they had better petition the House of Commons. “For,” he said, mournfully, “that is the place where they redress grievances now-a-days,” The bishops petitioned the House of Commons, the Commons were in a polite mood? question whether there was ever seated within St. Stephen’s chapel, a more polite parliament than the parliament then assembled. Parliament voted at once that the bishops had a grievance and that it never should be said that the bishops appealed the parliament of England in vain, and they further voted that with the view of giving the bishops more time to attend to their spiritual duties they should be henceforth relieved from the trouble of attending their places in the House of Lords! This resolution was conveyed in such touching language that I am sure the prelates must have been delighted at the spiritual perception of a worldly House of Commons; for the House of Commons said it had been induced to come to that resolution out of tender concern for the interests of souls. The bishops went their way; it is reported that a few of them were overtaken by a dash of the old Adam as they went forth, and that they turned round and cast a lingering look on the flesh-pots of Egypt. Still they went forth, and you now see the folly of straining a point too far. Never strain a point too far. The prelates had strained a point too far, — they cried out “All or nothing.” That is always a dangerous thing for despotism to do. It is the only cry for free men because there can be no compromise on the question of liberty; but if the despot be wise, he will concede from time to time; and if the Pope of Rome had been wise, he might have lived ten years longer, but the fact of refusing all concession puts him in an awkward position. You know the result — like the king of Naples, who threw a constitution out of the window when he was about to run away — the Pope is now too late: In this country on the back of this event, the king

made the miserable attempt to seize the five members of the Lower House, and it was then that the nation roused itself to advance upon the civil wars. I have no time to sketch them except to say that the civil wars were sustained with great courage on both sides, and history attests — Macaulay tells you, and all the modern writers, that the party that saved the cause of the parliament was the godly party, the Nonconforming party. Headed by my lord of Essex, the parliamentary armies in Cornwall, Somerset, and Devon were beaten. But what best the king? The iron-side regiments, and the regiments of the lovely companies under Cromwell — the Baptist, Independents, Presbyterian, and Low Church brethren. The men of godly energy were roused to action by this magnificent soldier, and at length in the face of the ruffles and flowers, and dash and gallantry of the royalists, the proud cavalier army is destroyed amidst the thunder of artillery and the rattling of musketry, and the ‘dashing of steel on the deathless fields of Naseby and Marston Moor. The Revolution was not the work of Dissenters, but the work of despotism; the liberal party never makes revolutions; despotism makes revolutions by its infatuated resistance to what is right. The conservative Nonconformist element survives the death of the king, enters into conflict to prop up the irregular Averment, and under the brief but brilliant reign of Cromwell, to gospel was preached with fervor from one end of England to the other, and though Cromwell did not thoroughly understand religious freedom, that is to say, he had not grown to understand that there should be no interference on the part of the state with religion, yet in the main he never interfered except to put down conspiracy. It was the age in which Chillingworth was promulgating his Episcopalian aphorism. “The Bible and the Bible alone is the religion of Protestants.” It was the age of Owen, and Howe, and Baxter, the immortal author of *The Saint's Everlasting Rest*.

It was the age of John Bunyan, the greatest of our allegorists; an age in which the learning and piety of the people broke out with force. But unhappily there were divisions in the Nonconformist camp. There was a party that wanted to set up the Presbytery, and this party was a powerful party. It was confronted by the Baptists and Independents, and of course by Episcopalians, and by that great intellectual exponent of Nonconformity, that illustrious scholar, whose life is at once the glory of our own country and the astonishment of the world — John Milton, the noblest defender of unlicensed printing and unlicensed preaching and the noblest defender of absolute civil and religious freedom who ever trod the soil England. The commonwealth fell because it rested too much on the prowess of Cromwell; it fell through the ignorance, and the divisions and corruptions of the people; it fell through the dissatisfied intrigues of Republicans and Presbyterians. The nations went back to her old constitution, for England is not a revolutionary country. Her tendencies, though progress give and liberal, are always conservative in the best sense. The nation, torn by faction, and fatigued by storms, recalled the son of the late king. We came in on his declaration of *Breda*, a declaration in which he promised that none should suffer on account of conscience, and that none should be disturbed for their conduct towards his late father; it was a full and complete amnesty, with the exception of the persons of the regicides. Now, the Presbyterian party thought that by a little conformity, things might be managed. Even the noble Mr. Owen, and one or two others, thought that a partial conformity would be the best thing. But no sooner was Charles II. upon the throne than in the face of the declaration of *Breda*, on Tower-hill and at Charing-cross a holy band of men, though branded with the name of regicide, devout men went to the block one after another. There was that Colonel Harrison, of whose execution

there is a record kept in Bristol, written by a Mr. James, which is deposited in the library of the Baptist College. It is dated, “London, — That dismal, bloody, and never-to-be-forgotten 13th of the 8th month, 1660. This sad day hath the enemy prevailed to shed the blood of the innocent according to the cursed sentence of this accursed generation, for dear Harrison was about eight this morning brought out of Newgate, Raven on a sledge to Charing-cross, where by ten they had handed and quartered hills. He went out with as cheerful a countenance as ever I saw him, and held out so to the end. His speech was very short, but very heavenly, encouraging still to own the cause of Christ, which, he said, Christ would revive. He said they did not know what they did, that he was fully assured of the love of the Lord, and that the Lord would in due time own and justify him in that for which he was condemned.” Carew, ancestor of the present Carew, of Cornwall, perished in the same way, and while the executioner was cutting up the body of Mr. Carew, someone pressed Hugh Peters the famous chaplain to the Parliamentary army, and the executioner rubbed his bloody hands against Hugh Peter’s face, and said to him, “How do you like this, then Mr. Peters?” for his turn for execution came next. Peters looked at him, and said, “I bless the Lord I am not dismayed, you may do your worst.” He knelt down and prayed, and hoped that those who were present would not despise the truths of the kingdom because he was called to stiffer for them. “What we did,” said he, “was under a government *de facto*; did it in the interest of the Church, and for the liberties of the people, and if the like circumstances occurred, and we were spared we would do it again” and then exclaiming with fervor, “Lord Jesus, help me! Lord Jesus receive my spirit,” he laid his head on the block, “And so,” said a dear friend who accompanied him to the ladder, “the soul of our saintly brother was wafted to heaven.” Sir Harry Vane was

beheaded at Tower Hill in the same year, although he had protested against the execution of King Charles. Before he laid his head on the block, he said, "One moment and I have done," and when he had prayed fervently, he said, "Men and brethren, this case will have a resurrection, it can never die;" and then laying his head down, he became one of the martyrs for our Nonconforming faith, and for the liberties of the people. John Milton went into private life, leaning on the arm of Elwood the Quaker. After having discharged his duties as Latin secretary to the parliament of Cromwell with incomparable brilliancy, to quote the language of Macaulay, "He retired from the obscurity of that obscene age to revel in a scene so lovely, in a language so sublime, that it might not have misbecome those ethereal virtues which he saw with that inner eye, which no calamity could darken, throwing their crowns upon the pavement of jasper and of gold." He retired into comparative quietude to revel in the gorgeous creations of *Paradise Lost and Regained*. The year 1662 arrived. The king and court became recreant to their promises, and soon proved to the Presbyterians their folly in trusting this wicked and weak king. A parliament more royalist than the court elected under the maddening influence of reaction, passed the famous Act of Uniformity, that Act of Uniformity that was to winnow the church and test its spirit — that was to raise up once more in the bosom of the Church of England, a cloud of witnesses — Nonconformists still. Many of the Baptist and Independent churches were closed; the insurrection of the fifth monarchy men in London had led to a general attack on the Independent and Baptist meeting-houses, which were closed in all directions. Then the Act of Uniformity demanded implicit conformity, and on that ground day, the anniversary of the massacre of St. Bartholomew, that day afterwards called by Englishmen, "the black Bartholomew's day," on that brand day when the Act of Uniformity was

enforced, two thousand ministers walked out of the Church of England and abandoned all their preferments, unfurling the old flag of English Nonconformity. Again you see it is the Nonconforming element. But there is something more. Cromwell's army of fifty thousand men was dissolved by Charles, but by dissolving the army, they sent what they call fire-brands throughout the country, tied to the foxes' tails, — fire-brands that set the nation on fire. These men went into the villages and settled down. The villagers affected fear of them at first. There were very few invitations to breakfast, very few invitations to tea, but by-and-bye. Somehow, or other, these old soldiers prospered in worldly matters, attended to their business, had family's prayers at home, would pray on alone if they could not pray openly and never to be put down. At length, the villagers and the townspeople used to nudge one another if they saw one holier than another, "Is not that one of old Nol's soldiers?" There was not a conspiracy against Charles's tyranny that these fellows did not pull the strings; if they saw a spark they would blow it, and if they could not get a flame, it was not for want of will, but want of wind. They did their best, and struggled hard in all the conflicts of Charles's reign, and a reign it was of intone able suffering. There are many statements concerning Nonconformists; you will find a petition from George Fox in which he tells you that on one occasion three thousand and sixty-eight Quakers were imprisoned, another statement places the number at four thousand, two hundred, five hundred were placed in jail in and round London in Cheshire, sixty-eight were confined in one room, and many died in prison; John Bunyan went to jail, dissenting ministers in all directions went to jail. Then came in 1664 the Test and Corporation Acts, excluding as they did all Dissenters from all places of office and preferment. These were followed by the Five Mile Act, that levied fines and imprisonment upon any

who came within five miles of the town where they had formerly held a living and preached the gospel. Dissenters in chains; upwards of ten or twelve millions of money levied in fines from the commencement of Charles II.'s reign; at the close of the reign of James II., suffering and imprisonment; sixty thousand Dissenters passing through the jails; many dying in prison; repeated conspiracies; executions of great and honorable men, but still, still the element of Nonconformity held on, and you come to the death of Charles II., and the brief reign of James II. It is the old story again. The attempt of the Nonconformists to aid Monmouth; constant endeavors to struggle for a higher, civil, and religious liberty, until the king, becoming Papist, endeavored to tamper with the Dissenters, under the plea that he would grant liberty of conscience. Several attempts were made to seduce the Dissenters, but the Dissenters understood what it meant, and though they had been martyred, had suffered imprisonment, and had really been driven to madness by oppression, in 1688, when the Church of England recovered her senses, and found what a faithless power the Stuart power was, Nonconformity shook hands with Episcopacy, and the great power confronted despotism once more, and the throne of James II. was shaken down, and William, Prince of Orange, amid the plaudits of Nonconformists, was crowned King of England, and this "glorious revolution" is another glory that crowns the Nonconformist cause.

Scarcely, however, is James II driven away, than the old conformist and oppressive party revive their ancient tactics. The nonjuring clergy, the corrupt high church people, began to conspire against the king's throne. They held secret relations with the exiled family. The party that sustained the king was the low-church party, the Presbyterians, and the Dissenters, and there arose a great writer, who may fairly be called the William

Cobbett of his time, — I mean Daniel Defoe, of Nonconformist notoriety, — whose vigorous pen eloquently defended the throne of King William. Nonconformity was the right arm of this revolution. There was no power in the country so ready for this great change as the Nonconforming power. William passes away, Queen Anne came. She had a dash of the Stuart blood in her, whereupon you have the old persecution. It always breaks out like the small-pox, whenever you come into the presence of a Stuart. There were the old attempts to fine the Dissenters, and when this did not do, to bribe them by the *regium donum*, introduced by a well-known statesman who said, “If you cannot put them down by force, put them down by sugar-plums,” and I am inclined to believe that the second policy is more fatal than the first. The churches now declined in religious life, and a cloud of irreligion and sensualism darkened the land, when again the Nonconformist element broke forth anew in the Church, for the Church of England has never been without a people owning God, a people understanding that Episcopacy is a secondary matter, their tests may be Episcopal, but their principles are Christian. They uphold Episcopacy if it does not interfere with them, but allow me to say that, if Episcopacy had been as wise and liberal at the middle of the last century as it is now, there would have been fewer Nonconformists than we have now in the country. There arose in the Church of England a body of earnest men. One of them was John Wesley, whose name we can never forget; another, George Whitfield — holy and earnest expounders of evangelical sentiments. At first, they labored in the Church, until persecution drove them forth to preach in fields and in public halls; it was complained by some of the lazy clergy that Mr. Wesley did a great deal of mischief, for his sermons wore so long that people got to like long sermons, and those who had bought a preferment the condition that the sermons were

to be short, complained that they had been cheated out of their property, and that a man that set such a bad example ought to be interfered with. Thanks be to God they had the courage to grow, and they grew in grace and in wisdom. Wesley and Whitfield blew the trumpet-notes of a new reformation. In 1717, when the Pretender was marching to recover the throne, the Nonconformists opposed him; and in 1745, when the Pretender was more likely to be successful, Wesley and Whitfield had roused the country, and amongst the first people to take up arms against the Pretender were the Nonconforming people.

Well, sirs, from this time, what do you see? A growth in Nonconformity, dissent growing in Evangelical life and power the growth of dissent and the growth of liberty. You have seen the nation leap on, till in 1825 or 1826 the Test and Corporation Act and the other abominable laws that excluded Dissenters from power were repealed partly through the influence of Lord John Russell. Down they went. The Catholic Emancipation came, and other great changes that disturbed the old balance of power. Then sirs, came a greater spirit of evangelization. Bible societies were faded in which the Dissenters played a leading part, second to none in their benevolence and activity. You have seen missionary societies formed to grasp the distant nations of the earth, in which each of the Nonconforming bodies have played an honorable and pious part. You have seen popular schools founded for the education of the poor, and when Bell and Lancaster first propounded their scheme of popular teaching, they would have been put down if they had not been sustained by the Nonconformists of England.

You have seen the Nonconformists upholding a spiritual propaganda, defending liberty opposing the right divine of kings, and taking the lead in defending constitutional liberty.

Nonconformists have extended, by their free, voluntary agency, the power of evangelising the people of this country. They have built hundreds of meeting-houses without asking the state to grant them a farthing of money, and they have raised them by their own voluntary contributions, and I have no doubt that when Sir Samuel Morton Peto, or some other member shall call attention to this magnificent temple when the debate on church-rates shall be renewed, there will not be wanting those who will be inclined to say that you have set a bad example, for you only reflect upon the laziness of other people, and it is an improper thing to do this; it is not fair that you should show that you can build temples and maintain them; it is an unkind cut at other people which benevolent people would never have done. There stands the fact. You have popularised schools, and I do not hesitate to say that conformity has resisted every reform until it was obtained by Nonconformity, and then it has followed in the wake. Every reform it has opposed. It prophesied evil of education; it said first it would lead to sedition, atheism, and deism and then when it so “that wend Nonconformists were educating the children, it set up schools itself, and followed in the same direction. It declared that the voluntary principle was wrong, and yet timing the past fifty years, it has built, I rejoice to say two thousand Episcopal churches by the voluntary principle. It drove out Wesley and Whitfield from the church because they preached in unconsecrated places, and now thanks in part to the exertions of my worthy friend, Mr. Surgeon, they have not only thrown open — and I give him the credit of battering the doors — they have not only thrown open St. Paul’s Cathedral and Westminster Abbey, but you see clergymen preaching in public halls and theatres, in imitation of Nonconformists. The Church of England cannot live without Nonconformity. Nonconformity has conquered her and she must imitate

Nonconformity. Friends, do I say this rudely? No, I say it gratefully, in the presence of my Maker, that we have been proved to be right by experience. Every step made by our opponents is in our direction, and never against us, never! From the very attempt made to compromise church-rates, you see this illustrated compromise! To think of a supreme body compromising at all! This “the day of compromise! “What will you take, gentlemen? — you are victorious — what will you take?” Nothing but liberty absolute liberty. What! yield now? — now that the Almighty goodness has brought us to be exemplars of the spiritual power of the Church? What! yield now — when we tread in the feet of saints and martyrs — in their blood-bedabbled footsteps — carrying over their graves the banner of the good old cause? No; we will raise more loudly our prayers, more loudly our sermons: we will ring out the great fact that there shall be no power supreme in this country but LIBERTY — freedom for all sects and for all denominations. Oh! my lords and gentlemen, you excite the smiles of children when you speak as though you had the power to confirm church-rates, and you awaken the pity of men when you bewail the fact that Nonconformists claim equality with the Church of England, not in emoluments and titles, but in a common liberty. You must yield, my lords and gentlemen, as you have yielded before. God has taken away every other power out of your hands. You can only now decide whether you will yield gracefully, generously, and justly, or whether you will sink moodily beneath the rising tide. Remember, ours is the age in which the temporal power of Papacy is washed from its moorings; Europe rises beyond its priestly and absolute rule, the young kingdom of Italy is shaking off the power of the Papacy, marching under the leadership of Garibaldi; England is covered with chapels and schools. Half the Church of England is consciously or unconsciously Nonconformist.

Remember, my lords and gentlemen, that we are your fellow-citizens; in loyalty to the throne, in obedience to all laws that governments have authority to enforce — for we draw the line — we know that we are commanded by our Divine Master to “render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s.” Yes, my lords and gentlemen, we are your fellow-citizens. In contributions to the State, the Nonconformists are surpassed by none; in voluntary activities, gifts to hospitals, missionary societies, Bible societies, reformatory institutions, ragged-schools, day-schools, Sunday-schools, they gratefully challenge you to investigation and comparison. Their men and women are to be found leading or aiding every useful enterprise. They have popularized preaching in unconsecrated places; they have reared altars of faith and prayer in fields, streets, cottages, barns, halls, and theatres. And you, my lords and gentlemen, will not be disposed to deny that their untiring devotion abolished negro-slavery; rendered the penal code more humane; ameliorated prison-discipline; stimulated temperance and education; aided in the passing of the Reform Bill; and were the foremost leaders and largest subscribers in the great movement for the Repeal of the Corn Laws. You fear, my lords and gentlemen, that England would cease to be Christian if one sect ceased to be legally patronized! Oh! you fear this in the light of Nonconformist history! Fling, I beseech you, this dishonorable fear away! In the name of that kingdom which is not made with hands, fling this un-Christian fear away! Help, rather, to free the Church from injustice and the citizens from wrong. Help to proclaim the era of religious equality and freedom, and the Church shall put on a new life, and enter into evangelical rivalry with all other sects. If she loses in wealth she shall gain in power, if she declines in earthly splendor she shall grow in heavenly beauty, and in the vigor of her spiritual manifestations. A great

writer and brilliant historian, whose memory we all revere, and whose polite and cultivated mind won the admiration of the world, has thus eloquently expressed himself: "The ark of God was never taken till surrounded by the arms of earthly defenders, in captivity its sanctity was sufficient to preserve it from insult, and to lay the hostile friend prostrate on the threshold of his own temple. The real security of Christianity is to be found in its benevolent morality, in its exact adaptation to the human heart, in the facility with which it accommodates itself to every capacity of the human intelligence, in the consolation which it bears to the house of mourning, in the light with which it brightens the mystery of the grave. To such a system it can bring no addition of dignity or power that it is part and parcel of the common law. It is not now left for the first time to rely upon the force of its own evidence and the attractions of its own beauty. Its sublime theology vanquished the Grecian schools in the fair conflict of reason with reason. The wisest and bravest of the Caesars found their arms unavailing when opposed to the weapons that were not carnal, and to the kingdom that was not of this world. The victory which Porphyry and Diocletian failed to obtain is not reserved to all appearance for any in this age who direct their attacks against the last restraint of the powerful and the last hope of the wretched. The entire history of Christianity shows, that those we thrust temporal power upon, treat her as their prototypes treated her author. They bow the knee and spit upon her. They cry 'Hail!' and smite her on the cheek. They place a spectre in her hand, but it is a fragile reed. They crown her, but it is with thorns.

They cover with purple the wounds their own hands have inflicted, and inscribe magnificent titles over the cross on which they have placed her to perish in ignominy and chains." Such was the language of the noble Lord Macaulay, and such,

my lords and gentlemen, is the faith of Nonconformists. What more need I say? This history tells its own story! Rouse yourselves; reverence your grand traditions. Be faithful! Bow your knee, and bend yourselves in adoration before the throne of the Almighty goodness. Bear about you the marks of this ancient glory. Never sully your ancient principles. March on, knowing that until the last vestige of ecclesiastical wrong is dead, until liberty is enjoyed by all states, that you have a glorious work to do, and God shall bless you, and sanctify and make you a blessing, until the fullness of all nations shall come, and the Spirit of the Lord be poured forth in triumphant power upon all lands, to consume all foulness, and all the earth with light, and love, and liberty.

The Rev. C. H. SPURGEON said, without the formality of proposing and seconding he would propose a vote of thanks, both to Sir John Burgoyne, for his kindness in presiding, and to Mr. Vincent, for his eloquent address. He hoped they would prove that they had felt his words by one and all helping to extend to others the liberty they themselves enjoyed. He trusted the day would come when Church-rates should be abolished, and hoped that Mr. Vincent would be there to address them when that should take place. It would be almost as glorious a day of emancipation as the Negro slave had when he felt his fetters were dashed to the ground, and he was a freeman.

The resolution was carried by acclamation.

Sir JOHN BURGOYNE said it was very evident that the meeting were very sensible of the great power of Mr. Vincent's discourse from the enthusiastic demonstrations they had exhibited during the course of his speech, and he was fully justified in giving their thanks to Mr. Vincent for the brilliancy of his eloquence.

Mr. VINCENT said he could only express his very earnest thanks for the kind attention of this large assembly, at the close

of a series of such crowded meetings as had been held in the Tabernacle during the last two or three weeks. He begged to thank them most respectfully for their courtesy and kindness.

The Benediction was then pronounced, and the proceedings terminated.

391 THE FIRST RESURRECTION –
REV. 20:4-6, 12

A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Morning, May 5th, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.” —
Revelation 20:4-6

“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.” —
Revelation 20:12

YOU WILL BEAR me witness, my friends, that it is exceedingly seldom I ever intrude into the mysteries of the future with regard either to the second advent, the millennial reign, or the first and second resurrection. As often as we come across it in our expositions, we do not turn aside from the point,

but if guilty at all on this point, it is rather in being too silent than saying too much. And now, in bringing forward this question this morning, I would say, I do not do it to amuse your curiosity by novelty, or that I may pretend to have the true key of the prophecies which are as yet unfulfilled. I scarcely think it would be justifiable for me to spend my time upon prophetic studies for which I have not the necessary talent, nor is it the vocation to which my Master has ordained me. I think some ministers would do far more for the profit of God's people, if they would preach more about the first advent and less about the second. But I have chosen this topic because I believe it has practical bearings, and may be made useful, instructive, and rousing to us all. I find that the most earnest of the Puritanic preachers did not forbear to dwell upon this mysterious subject. I turn to Charnock, and in his disquisition upon the Immutability of God, he does not hesitate to speak of the conflagration of the world, of the millennial reign, and the new heavens and new earth. I turn to Richard Baxter, a man who above all other men loved the souls of men, who more perhaps than any man, with the exception of the apostle Paul, travailed in birth for souls, and I find him making a barbed arrow out of the doctrine of the coming of the Lord, and thrusting this great truth into the very heart and conscience of unbelievers, as though it were heaven's own sword. And John Bunyan too — plain, honest John — he who preached so simply that a child could comprehend him, and was certainly never guilty of having written upon his forehead the word "Mystery," he, too, speaks of the advent of Christ, and of the glories which shall follow and uses this doctrine as a stimulus to the saints, and as a warning to the ungodly. I do not think therefore I need tremble very much if the charge should be brought against me of bringing before you an unprofitable subject. It shall profit if God shall bless the word; and if it be

God's word we may expect his blessing if we preach it all, but he will withdraw it if we refrain from teaching any part of his council because in our pretended wisdom we fancy that it would not have practical effect.

Now, my dear friends, in introducing again these texts to you, I shall just remark that in the first text which relates to the people of God, we have *three great privileges*; and in the second text, which relates to the ungodly who are not in covenant with Christ, we have *three great and terrible things* which may soon be perceived.

I. First of all, we will take the first text with its **THREE PRIVILEGES**. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."

Before I proceed to enter into these privileges, I must remark that two modes of understanding this verse have been proposed, both of which I think are untenable. I have been reading carefully through Albert Barnes. He gives it, as his opinion, that the first resurrection here spoken of is a *resurrection of principles*, — a resurrection of the patience, the undaunted courage, the holy boldness and constancy of the ancient martyrs. He says these great principles have been forgotten, and, as it were, buried and that during the spiritual reign of Christ which is to come, these great principles will have a resurrection. Now, I appeal to you, would you, in reading that passage, think this to be the meaning? Would any man believe that to be its meaning, if he had not some thesis to defend? The fact is, we sometimes read Scripture, thinking of what it ought to say, rather than what it does say. I do not hesitate to affirm that any simple-minded person, who was intent upon discovering the mind of the Spirit and not upon finding a method by which the words could be compelled to express his own mind, would say

that the resurrection of principles, or the resurrection of doctrines does not give the fair meaning of the words here stated.

Brethren, cannot you perceive at a glance that this is the resurrection of men? And is it not a literal resurrection, too? Does it not say, “I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus?” is it not written, “The rest of the dead lived not?” Does this mean the rest of the dead principles? the rest of the dead doctrines? You cannot so translate it. It is — we have no doubt whatever — a literal resurrection of the saints of God, and not of principles nor of doctrines. But another interpretation has been proposed. I once had the misfortune to listen to an excellent friend of mine who was preaching upon this very text, and I must confess, I did not attend with very great patience to his exposition. He said it meant, blessed and holy is he who has been born again, who has been regenerated, and so has had a resurrection from dead works by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. All the while he was preaching, I could not help wishing that I could propose to him the difficulty, how he woeful make this metaphorical interpretation agree with the literal fact, that the rest of the dead lived not till the thousand years were finished? For, if the first resurrection here spoken of is a metaphorical, or spiritual, or typical resurrection, why the next where it speaks of the resurrection of the dead must be spiritual and mystical, and metaphorical too. Now, no one would agree to this. You know, when you read a chapter, you are not to say, “This part is a symbol, and is to be read so, and the next part is to be read literally.” Brethren, the Holy Ghost does not jumble metaphors and facts together. A typical book has plain indications that it is so intended, and when you come upon a literal passage in a typical chapter, it is always attached to a something else which is distinctly literal, so that you cannot, without violence to

common sense, make a typical meaning out of it. The fact is, in reading this passage with an unbiased judgment, having no purpose whatever to serve, having no theory to defend, — and I confess I have none, for I know but very little about mysteries to come, — I could not help seeing there are *two literal resurrections* here spoken of, one of the spirits of the just, and the other of the bodies of the wicked; one of the saints who sleep in Jesus, whom God shall bring with *him*, and another of those who live and die impenitent, who perish in their sins.

But this by way of preface to this first text. Let me now proceed. There are three privileges in the text.

1. Now as to the first privilege, *the priority of resurrection*. I think Scripture is exceedingly plain and explicit upon this point. You have perhaps imagined that all men will rise at the same moment, that the trump of the archangel will break open every grave at the same instant, and sound in the ear of every sleeper at the identical moment. Such I do not think is the testimony of the Word of God. I think the Word of God teaches, and teaches indisputably, that the saints shall rise first. And be the interval of time whatever it may, whether the thousand years are literal years, or a very long period of time, I am not now about to determine; I have nothing to do except with the fact that there are two resurrections, a resurrection of the just, and afterwards of the unjust, — a time when the saints of God shall rise, an aftertime when the wicked shall rise to the resurrection of damnation. I shall now refer you to one or two passages in Scripture, and you will use your Bibles and follow me. First, let us look at the words of the apostle in that chapter which we use generally as a burial service, the first epistle to the Corinthians, 15:20: — “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But

every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, each the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power." There has been an interval of two thousand years between "Christ the firstfruits" and the "afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." Why not then a thousand years between that first resurrection and "the end." Here is a resurrection of those who are Christ's, and of them only. As for the wicked, one would scarce know that they would rise at all from this passage, if it were not for the general statement, "All shall be made alive," and even this may not be so comprehensive as at first sight it seems. It is enough for me that there is here a particular and exclusive resurrection of those who are Christ's. Turn to another passage, which is perhaps plainer still, the first epistle to the Thessalonians, 4:13: — "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent," — or have a preference beyond — "them which are asleep."

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Here is nothing said whatever about the resurrection of the wicked: it is only stated that the dead in Christ shall rise first. Our apostle is evidently speaking of a first resurrection; and since we know that a first resurrection implies a second,

and since we know that the wicked dead are to rise as well as the righteous dead, we draft the inference that the wicked dead shall rise at the second resurrection, after the interval between the two resurrections shall have been accomplished.

Turn to Philippians 3, verses 8 and 11, and compare the two. “Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.” “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.” What does he mean there? Everyone will rise, no orthodox Christian doubts that. The doctrine of a general resurrection is received by all the Christian Church. What, then, is this resurrection after which Paul was exerting himself, if by any means he might attain unto it? It could not be the general resurrection; he would attain unto that live as he list. It must have been some superior resurrection, of which only those shall be partakers who have known Christ and the power of his resurrection, having been made conformable unto his death. I think you cannot interpret this passage, or give it any force of meaning, without you admit that there is to be a prior resurrection of the just before the resurrection of the unjust. If you will turn to a passage in Luke 20:35, which probably is fresh upon your memories, you will find there something which I will venture to call a clear proof of a special resurrection. The Sadducees had proposed a difficulty as to the relationship of men and women in the future state, and Jesus here says, “But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.” Now,

brethren, there is some *worthiness* necessary for this resurrection. Do you not perceive it? There is some distinction involved in being called the children of the resurrection. Now, again I say, you do not doubt but that all shall rise. In that sense, then, every man would be one of the children of the resurrection; in that sense, no worthiness would be required for resurrection at all. There must be, then, a resurrection for which worthiness is needed, a resurrection which shall be a distinguished privilege, which, being obtained, shall confer upon its possessor the distinguished and honorable title of a “child of the resurrection.” It seems to me that this is plain enough, and can be put beyond all dispute. In chapter 14 of the same gospel, in verse 14, you have a promise made to those who, when they make a feast, do not do it with the intention of getting anything in return. “When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.” I would not insist upon it that this would prove that the just rose at a different time; but still there is to be a resurrection of the just, and on the other hand, there is to be a resurrection of the unjust; and the time of recompense for the righteous is to be the resurrection of the just, which is spoken of as being a particular period. He might just as well have said, “Thou shalt be recompensed at the general resurrection.”

There was no need to have said, “At the resurrection of the just,” if the two are to happen at the same time. The words “of the just” are superfluous in the passage, unless they do refer to some era distinguished and distinct from the resurrection of the unjust. I will not say that this is any clear proof, but still, all these things put together, with other passages I might quote if time did not fail me, would, I think, establish upon a Scriptural basis the doctrine of the two resurrections. But I would refer

to one more, which seems to me to be exceedingly clear, in John 6:39, 40, 44, 54. In these verses the Savior four times over speaks of his own believing people, and promises them a resurrection. "I will raise him up at the last day." Now, is there any joy or beauty in this, to the people of God in particular, unless there be a speciality in it for them? It is the lot of all to rise, and yet we have here a privilege for the elect! Surely, brethren, there is a different resurrection. Besides, there is yet a passage which now springs to my memory in the Hebrews, where the apostle, speaking of the trials of the godly, and their noble endurance, speaks of them as, "not accepting deliverance that they might obtain a better resurrection." The betterness was not in the after results of resurrection, but in the resurrection itself. How, then could it be a better resurrection, unless there be some distinction between the resurrection of the saint and the resurrection of the sinner? Let the one be a resurrection of splendor, let the other be a resurrection of gloom and horror, and let there be a marked division between the two, that as it was in the beginning, it maybe even to the end, the Lord hath put a difference between him that feareth God and him that feareth him not.

I am well aware that I have not been able to put the argument so well but that any antagonist may cavil at it; but I have been preaching to my own congregation rather than fighting with opponents, and I hope you will take these passages and weigh them for yourselves, and if they do not teach you that the dead in Christ shall rise first, do not believe me if I say they do. If you cannot perceive the fact yourself, if the Holy Spirit show it not unto you, why then read the passage again, and then find if you can another and a better meaning. I have no purpose to serve except to make the Scripture as plain to you as possible; and I say it yet again, I have not the shadow of a doubt in my own soul that these passages do teach us that

there shall first of all be a resurrection concerning which it shall be said, “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection, on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

2. I now pass on to the second privilege here promised to the godly. *The second death on them hath no power.* This, too, is a literal death, none the less literal because its main terror is spiritual, for a spiritual death is as literal as a carnal death. The death which shall come upon the ungodly without exception can never touch the righteous. Oh, brethren, this is the best of all. As for the first resurrection, if Christ hath granted that to his people there must be something glorious in it if we cannot perceive it. “It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know when he shall appear we shall be like *him*.” I think the glories of the first resurrection belong to the glories which shall be revealed in us rather than the glories that are revealed to us. What shall be the majesty of that form in which we shall rise, what the distinguished happiness we shall then enjoy, we can but guess at a distance, we cannot know it to the full. But on this point, we can understand what Scripture states, and understand this much well, that damnation, the second death, shall have no power on those who rise at the first resurrection. How should it? How can damnation fall on any but those who are sinners and are guilty of sin? But the saints are not guilty of sin.

They have sinned like others, and they were by nature the children of wrath even as others. But their sin has been lifted from them: it was laid upon the scapegoats’ head of old. He, the Eternal substitute, even our Lord Jesus, carried all their guilt and their iniquity into the wilderness of forgetfulness, where it shall never be found against them forever. They wear the Savior’s righteousness, even as they have been washed in his

blood; and what wrath can lie on the man who is not only guiltless through the blood, but is meritorious through imputed righteousness! Oh, arm of Justice, thou art nerveless to smite the blood-washed. Oh, ye flames of hell, how could even so much as the breath of your heat pass upon the man who is safe covered in the Savior's wounds! How is it possible for you, O Deaths, Destructions, Horrors, Glooms, Plagues, and Terrors, so much as to flit like a cloud over the serene sky of the spirit which has found peace with God through the blood of Christ! No, brethren,

“Bold shall I stand in that great day;
For who aught to my charge shall lay?
While, through thy blood, absolved I am
From sin's tremendous curse and shame.”

There shall be a second death; but over us it shall have no power. Do you understand the beauty of the picture? As if we might walk through the flames of hell and they should have *no power* to devour us any more than when the holy children paced with ease over the hot coals of Nebuchadnezzar's seven times heated furnace. Death may bend his bow and fit the arrow to the string. But we laugh at thee, O Death! and thee, O hell, we will despise! for over both of you, ye enemies of man, we shall be more than conquerors through him that hath loved us. We shall stand invulnerable and invincible, defying and laughing to scorn our every foe.

And all this because we are washed from sin and covered with a spotless righteousness.

But there is another reason why the second death can have no power on the believer; because when the prince of this world cometh against us then, we shall be able to say what our Master did, “He hath nothing in me.” When we shall rise again

we shall be freed from all corruption: no evil tendencies shall remain in us. “I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed: for the Lord dwelleth in Zion.” “Without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing,” without even the shadow of a spot which the eye of omniscience could discover, we shall be as pure as Adam before his fall, as holy as the Immaculate manhood when it first came from the divine hand. We shall be better than Adam for Adam might sin, but we shall be so established in goodness, in truth, and in righteousness, that we shall not even be tempted again, much less shall we have any fear of falling. We shall stand spotless and faultless at the last great day. Brethren, lift up your heads. Contending with sin, cast down with doubts, lift up your heads, and wipe the tears from your eyes. There are days coming, the like of which angels have not seen, but you shall see them. There are times coming when your spirits shall no more fear the chain, nor shall ye even remember the wormwood and the gall.

“What, though your inbred sins require
Your flesh to see the dust:
Yet as the Lord your Savior rose
So all his followers must.”

And when they rise they shall leave the old Adam behind them. Blessed day! One of the most blessed parts of heaven — of heaven above or of heaven below — will be freedom from the tendency to sin, a total death to that old nature which has been our plague and woe.

3. There is yet a third privilege in the text, upon which I shall speak but briefly. I believe this to be also one of the glories that shall be revealed. The third privilege of the text is, “*They shall reign with him a thousand years.*” Here is another point upon which there has been a long and very vigorous contention. It

was believed in the early Church, I do not know whether there is any Scriptural foundation for the precise date they fixed, that the seventh thousand years of the world's history would be a Sabbath, that as there were six days of toil in the week, and the seventh was a day of rest, so the world would have six thousand years of toil and sorrow, and the seventh thousand would be a thousand years of rest. I say I do not know that there is any Scripture for that; I do know that there is none against it. I believe the Lord himself shall come, "but of that day and of that hour knoweth no man, no not even the angels of God." And I think it is idle to attempt to fix even the year or even the century when Christ shall come. Our business is to expect him always, to be always looking for his appealing, watching for his coming; that whether he came at cock-crow, or midnight, or at morning watch, we may be ready to go in with the wise virgins into the marriage feast, and to rejoice with our beloved. If there have been any dates given, I am not able at present to find them out. All these dates and mysteries I can leave to much more learned men, and men who give their whole time to it. The book of Revelation needs another expounder besides those who have loaded our shelves until they groan, for they have generally made confusion worse confounded. Their expositions have been rather "an obvelation" than a revelation, they have rather darkened counsel by words without knowledge than made the dark things plain. I am prepared to go about as far as my predecessor, Dr. Gill, went; as far as the old fathers of the Church went, as far as Baxter and Bunyan would have gone, but to go no further than that. Yet I think we may say this morning, there it in the text a distinct promise that the saints are to reign with Christ a thousand years, and I believe they are to reign with him *upon this earth*. There are some passages which I think obtain a singular fullness of meaning if this be true. Turn to Psalm 37:10, 11. It is that Psalm where

David has been fretting himself, because of the evil doers, and their prosperity upon the earth. He says, “For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shall diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.” You can interpret that to mean that the meek man shall enjoy much more of this world’s goods than the sinner, and that he shall have abundance of peace. But I think you have given it a lean meaning, a very lean meaning indeed. If it be true that these meek ones shall yet possess this very earth, and that here, in the abundance of peace through the Messiah’s reign, they shall rejoice in it, I think you have found a fuller meaning, and one which has a God-like meaning. So it is that God’s promises always have a wider meaning than we can conceive; now, in this case, if it only mean that the meek are to have what they gain in this life, which is very little indeed, if they are only to have what they enjoy here upon earth, which is so little, that I think if in this life only they have hope, they are of men the most miserable — if it only mean that, then the promise means less than we might conceive it to mean, but if it mean that they shall have glory even here, then you have given to it one of the widest meanings you can conceive, a meaning like the meanings usually given to the promises of God — wide, large, extensive, and worthy of himself. Brethren, the meek do not inherit the earth to any great degree at present, and we look for this in another age. Let me quote the language of Christ, lest you should think this passage peculiar to the Old Testament dispensation, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” How? where? when? Not now certainly, not in Christ’s days, not in apostolic times by any means. What did the meek inherit, brethren? Faggot, flames, racks pincers, dungeons. Their inheritance indeed, was nothing. They were destitute, addicted, tormented, they wandered about in sheepskins and

goatskins, and if the meek are ever to inherit the earth, certainly it must be in some age to come, for they have never inherited it yet. Turn again to a passage in Revelation 5:9, 10: — “And they sung a new song.” It is the very song we sang this morning, and it runs thus, “Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.” Whether any one disputes the genuineness of these words, I do not know; but if they mean anything at all, if the Holy Spirit meant to set forth any meaning, surely it must have been that the people of Christ shall reign *on the earth*. Besides, remember our Savior’s words in Matthew 19:28, where in answer to a question which had been put by Peter as to what his saints should have as the result of their losses for his sake, he said unto them, “Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.” It seems that Christ here is to come in the regeneration, when in a newborn world there shall be joys fitted for the newborn spirits, and then there shall be splendours and glories for the apostles first, and for all those who by any means have suffered any losses for Christ Jesus. You find such passages as these in the Word of God, “The Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.” You find another like this in Zachariah, “My God shall come with the multitude of his saints.” Indeed, I could not now take up your time by quoting many passages in which it seems to me that nothing but the triumph on the very spot

where they have fought the battle, nothing but the glory in the very place where they have had the tug of war, will meet the meaning of God's

Word. I do look forward to this with joy, that though I may sleep in Christ before my Master come, and I know not whether that shall be or no, yet I shall rise at the day of his appearing, and shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just if I have truly and faithfully served him; and that recompense shall be, to be made like unto him, and to partake of his glories before the eyes of men, and to reign with him during the thousand years.

Dr. Watts, I believe, understood that Christ is to come literally, for he says,

“Nor doth it yet appear
How great we must be made;
But when we see our Savior here,
We shall be like our Head.
A hope so much divine
May trials well endure,
May purge our souls from sense and sin
As Christ the Lord is pure.”

But to gather up what I have said, and to make one other observation. This doctrine which I have preached just now is not an unpractical one. For throughout the New Testament, whenever the apostle wants to stir up men to patience, to labor, to hope, to endurance, to holiness, he generally says something about the advent of Christ. “Be patient, brethren,” says he, “for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.” “Let your moderation be known unto all men, the Lord is at hand.” “Judge nothing before the time, till the Lord come.” “When the great Shepherd shall appear, ye also shall appear with him in glory.” Brethren,

I think we shall do wrong if we make too much of this; but we shall do equally wrong if we make too little of it. Let us give it a fair place in our thoughts, and especially let those of us who fear God and believe in Jesus take this to be a window through which we can look, when the house is dark and our home is full of misery, let us look to the time when we shall rise among the first, following Christ the firstfruits, when we shall reign with Christ, sharing in his glories, and when we shall know that the second death over us hath no power.

II. I shall now turn to the second part of the discourse briefly. To the ungodly **THREE THINGS IN SIMPLICITY.**

Sinner, you have heard us speak of the resurrection of the righteous. To you the word “resurrection” has no music. There is no flash of joy in your spirit when you hear that the dead shall rise again. But oh, I pray thee lend me thine ear while I assure thee in God’s name that thou shalt rise. Not only shall your soul live — you have perhaps become so brutish that you forget you have a soul — but your body itself shall live. Those eyes that have been full of lust shall see sights of horror; those ears which have listened to the temptations of the evil one, shall hear the thunders of the day of judgment; those very feet that bare you to the theater, shall attempt, but utterly fail to sustain you when Christ shall sit in judgment. Think not when your body is put into the soil that you have done with it. It has been partner with your soul in sin; it shall be sharer with your soul in the punishment. He is able to cast both body and soul into hell. The heathens believed in the immortality of the soul. We need not therefore prove what a heathen could conceive. It is the doctrine of the resurrection of the body which is peculiar to Christianity. You are not prepared to cast away the revelation of God I know. You receive that book as being God’s book, and it tells me that the dead, both small and great, shall rise. When the archangel’s trump shall sound, the whole of the old

inhabitants of the world before the flood shall rise out of the ocean. The buried palaces, the sunken homes, shall all give up the multitude who once married and were given in marriage, until Noah entered into the ark. Up shall rise from the great deeps of the fathomless sea, thousands upon thousands of men who have slept now these three and four thousand years. Every churchyard, too, where men have been quietly buried with Christian rites but yet were unchristian still, shall yield up its dead. The battle-field shall yield a mighty harvest, a harvest which was sown in blood, and which shall be reaped in tempest. Every place where man has lived and man has died shall see the dying quickened once again, and flesh and blood once more instinct with life. But the main thing with you is that you will be there. Living and dying as you now are, ungodly and unconverted, the most awful curse that could fall on you, with the exception of the damnation of your soul, is the sure and certain resurrection of your body. Go, now, and paint it if you will, and seek a beauty which the worm shall loathe. Go and pamper your body; drink the sweet and eat the fat. Go and luxuriate and indulge it in ease. Oh, sir, you may well pamper your bodies, for there is short enough time for your body to have mirth in; and when that short time is over thou shalt drink another wine — the dregs of the cup of God's wrath, which the wicked shall drain to the last drop. Satisfy thine ears with music now; thou shalt soon hear nothing but the howling of the damned! Go thou thy way, eat, drink, and be merry; but for all these the Lord shall bring thee into judgment — sevenfold for all thy sinful pleasures, yea seventy times seven, for all thy joys of lust, and wickedness and crime, shall the Lord be avenged on thee, in the great and terrible day of his wrath. Sinner, think thou of this, and when thou sinnest think of the resurrection.

But after the resurrection, according to the text, comes *the judgment*. You have cursed God. The oath died away. No, sir, it did not, it imprinted itself upon the great book of God's remembrance. You have entered the chamber of wantonness, or the hall of infidelity; you have walked through the stews of grime, and through the stench and filth of the brothel. You have wandered into sin and plunged into it, thinking it would all die with the day, that as the night covers up the sights of the day, so the night of death should cover up the deeds of your day of life. Not so. The books shall be opened. I think I see you wide your blanching cheeks, closing your eyes because you dare not look upon the Judge when he opens that page where stands your history. I hear yon sinner, boldest among you all. He is crying, "Ye rocks fall on me." There they stand, sublime and dread, those granite rooks; he would rather be crushed than stand there before the avenging eye; but the mountains will not loosen, their flinty bowels feel no pangs of sympathy, they will not move. You stand while the fiery eye looks you through and through, and the dread voice reads on, and on, and on, your every act, and word, and thought. I see you as the shameful crime is read, and men and angels hear. I see your horror as a nameless deed is told, in terms explicit, which none can misunderstand. I hear your thought brought out — that lust, that murder which was in the thought, but never grew into the deed. And you are all this while astonished like Belshazzar, when he saw the writing on the wall and his loins were loose, and he was terribly afraid. So shall it be with you; and yet again, and again, and again, shall you send up that awful shriek, "Hide us! hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb!"

But then cometh the end, the last of all. After death the judgment, after judgment *the damnation*. If it be a dreadful thing to live again, if it be a more dreadful thing still to spend the first

day of that life in the grand assize of God, how much more awful shall it be when the sentence is pronounced, and the terror of punishment shall begin! We believe that the souls of the wicked are already tormented, but this judgment will cast both body and soul into the lake of fire. Men and women, ye who fear not God, and have no faith in Jesus, I cannot picture to you damnation. Across it let me draw a curtain. But though we must not picture it, I pray you realize it. When Martin has painted some of his sublime pictures, he has generally heightened the effect by masses of darkness. Surely, this is the way in which God has painted hell, rather by masses of darkness than by definiteness of light. This much we know, that hell is a place of absence from God — a place for the development of sin, where every passion is unbridled every lust unrestrained — a place where God punishes night and day those who sin night and day — a place where there is never sleep, or rest or hope — a place where a drop of water is denied, though thirst shall burn the tongue — a place where pleasure never breathed, where light never dawned, where anything like consolation was never heard of — a place where the gospel is denied, where mercy droops her wings and dies a place where vengeance reigns and shakes his Shams, and brandishes his sword — a place of fury and of burning — a place, the like of which imagination hath not pictured. May God grant it may be a place which you shall never see, and whose dread you shall never feel. Sinner, instead of preaching it to thee, let me bid thee die from it. Die, sinner, and flight from hell becomes impossible, thou art lost then, eternally. Oh, while yet thou art on praying ground, I pray thee, think on thy end. “Because she remembered not her latter end, she came down wonderfully.” Let it not be said thus of you. Think! think! this warning may be the last you shall ever hear. You may never be spared to come to a place of worship again.

Perhaps, while you sit here the last sands are dropping from the hour glass; and then, no more warning can be given, because redemption and escape shall be impossible to you.

Soul, I lift up before thee now, Christ the crucified one — “Whosoever believeth on him shall never perish, but hath eternal life.” As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so this morning the Son of Man is lifted up. Sinner, see his wounds. Look to his thorn-crowned head. See the nails of his hands and of his feet. Do you perceive him? Hark! while he cries, “Why hast thou forsaken me?” Listen again while he says, “It is finished! It is finished! “Salvation finished! And now, elevation is freely preached to thee. Believe on Christ and thou shall be saved. Trust him, and all the horrors of the future shall have no power over you; but the splendours of this prophecy shall be fulfilled, be they what they may. Oh that this morning some of you may trust my Master for the first time in your lives, and this done, you need not curiously enquire what the future shall be, but you may sit down calmly and say, “Come when it will, my soul is on the rock of ages; it fears no ill; it fears no tempest; it defies all pain. Come quickly! come quickly! even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus.”

**392 TRUST IN GOD – TRUE WISDOM –
PROV. 16:20**

**A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Morning, May 12th, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“He who handles a matter wisely shall find good: and
whoever trusts in the Lord, happy is he.” — Proverbs 16:20**

WISDOM IS man's true path—that which enables him to accomplish best the end of his being, and which, therefore, gives to him the richest enjoyment, and the fullest play for all his powers. Wisdom is the compass by which man is to steer across the trackless waste of life. Without wisdom, man is as the wild donkey's colt; he runs here and there, wasting strength which might be profitably employed. Without wisdom, man may be compared to a soil untilled, which may yield some fair flowers, but can never field a harvest which shall repay the labor of the reaper, or even the toil of the gleaner. Give man wisdom—wisdom in the true sense of the term—and he rises to all the dignity that manhood can possibly know; he becomes a fit companion for the angels, and between him and God there is no creature; he stands next to the Eternal One, because Christ has espoused his nature, and so has linked humanity with divinity! But where shall this wisdom be found? Many have dreamed that they discovered it, but they have not possessed it. Where shall we find it? It were worth while to pierce the deep of the earth, to scale the heights of heaven, to traverse the

deserts, to plow the sea, to fly through the illimitable fields of ether—all were too little if we might but find this precious thing at last! “But,” the depth says, “It is not in me.” And the sea says, “It is not with me.” It cannot be had for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it—and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls—for the price of wisdom is above rubies! The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it—neither shall it be valued with pure gold. From where, then, comes wisdom? And where is the place of understanding, seeing it is hidden from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air? Destruction and death say, “We have heard the fame thereof with our ears. God understands the way thereof, and He knows the place thereof.”

Let us listen, then, to the voice of the Lord, for He has declared the secret. He has revealed to the sons of men wherein true wisdom lies, and we have it in the text, “Whoever trusts in the Lord, happy is he;” and that sentence is put in conjunction with another which teaches us this Truth of God—that to handle a matter wisely is to find good, and the true way to handle a matter wisely is to trust God! This is the short and brief method of escaping the greatest difficulties—this is the clue to the most intricate labyrinths; this is the lever which shall lift the most tremendous weights. He who trusts in the Lord has found out the way to handle matters wisely, and happy is he!

I shall take the text this morning, by God's assistance, in two ways. First, we shall apply it to *the wise handling of matters with regard to time and this present state*; and then, secondly, with regard to *the handling of the eternal matters relating to our destiny beyond the*

grave, and endeavor to show how trusting in the Lord is handling this matter wisely.

I. First, then, my dear friends, with regard to **THE WISE HANDLING OF MATTERS OF TIME WHICH CONCERN OUR BODIES AND OUR SOULS, WHILE WE ARE HERE BELOW.**

A man must be prudent in such a world as this. He will soon cut his feet if he does not watch his steps. He will soon tear his garments with thorns and briars if he does not choose his way. This is a land full of enemies; we must be wise or the arrow will suddenly find out a vulnerable place in our armor. We must be cautious, for we are not traveling in noonday on the king's highway, but rather at night-fall, and we may, therefore, be attacked by robbers, and may lose our precious treasures. He who is in a wilderness, and in a wilderness infested with robbers, must handle matters wisely if he would find good.

How shall we handle these matters wisely? Three or four come forward to instruct us, and the first lesson is one which Satan often teaches the young and foolish spirit. He says, "To handle a matter wisely is to *make your own will your law*, and to do that which seems to be the best for you, be it right or be it wrong." This was the lesson which he taught to Eve, when in the serpent's form he spoke the serpent's wisdom, "You shall be as gods." He said, "Mistrust the goodness of your Maker; believe that He is afraid lest you should attain to equal power, and dignity with Himself. Pluck the fruit. It is true He forbids, but who is Jehovah, that you should obey His voice? It is true He threatens to punish, but do not believe the threat, or if you believe it, dare it! He who cannot risk anything will never win; he who will not venture something, shall never make great gains. Do and dare, and you will be handling the matter wisely." She plucked the fruit and the next instant she must have perceived somewhat of her folly; but before many hours had

passed over man's head, he discovered nakedness, pains of body, weariness, toil, expulsion from Paradise, and tilling a thankless, thorny land, taught man that he had not handled the matter wisely, for he had not found good. And you, too, you sons and daughters of Eve, when the old serpent whispers in your ear, "Sin, and you shall escape from difficulty; be honest when you can afford to be so, but if you cannot live except by dishonesty, be dishonest; if you cannot prosper except by lies, then lie." Oh, listen not to his voice, I pray you! Harken to a better wisdom than this! This is a deception which shall destroy you! You shall find no good, but you shall find much evil; you shall sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind! You think that you dive into these depths for pearls, but the jagged rocks shall break you, and from the deep waters you shall never rise—except your lifeless corpse swim on the surface of the pestilential waves. Be wise and learn of God, and close your ears to him who would have you destroy yourself, that he may gloat his malicious spirit over your eternal misery! It is never wise to sin, brothers and sisters, never. However it may *seem* to be the best thing you can do, it is always the worst. There never was a man in such a position that it would be really profitable to him to sin. "But," you say, "some men have become rich by it!" Sirs, they have had sorrow with their riches; they have inherited the blasting curse of God, and so they have been really poorer than poverty could have made them! "But," you say, "men have mounted to the throne by breaking their oaths." I know they have; but temporary success is no sure sign of constant happiness! The Emperor's career is not yet ended—should he escape in this life, the perjurer shall meet his Judge! He who measures what man gains by what he seems to gain, has taken a wrong standard. There was never yet—I will repeat it—there was never yet any man who broke his word, who forfeited his oath, who turned aside from God's Word or

God's law—who in the end found it was profitable to him! He heaped up deceptions, he gathered together delusions— and when God awoke—and when that man awoke—as a dream when one awakes, so did he, or so *shall* he, despise the image on which his soul had doted!

But now the serpent moderates his hiss. “Do not sin,” he says; “there is no necessity for downright dishonesty or theft; do not absolutely plunge yourself into vice, but be wise,” he says, by which he means, “*Be crafty*; trim your sails when the wind changes—how can you reach your haven unless you learn to tack about? The straight road is thorny, so take the by-path—there will be another path which will bring you back after the thorns and flints are passed. Why,” says he, “will you dash your head against a stone? If there is a mountain in your way, why not wind about the base; why climb the summit; does not wisdom teach you that that which is easiest must be best, and that which is most consistent with the dictates of your own nature must, after all, be best for you?” Ah, slimy serpent! Ah, base deceiver—how many multitudes have been thus deceived! Why, brothers and sisters, the reason why we have not more men in this age whom one could trust, why we have not in our high places more men in whom we could place confidence, is because *policy* has been the law of individuals, and the law of nations, too, instead of that course of honesty which is like the flight of the arrow, certain and sure to reach its mark—not by tortuous windings—but by one onward straight line! Why do persons so frequently inquire what they ought to do in such a case—not meaning what God's law would have them do—but what will bring the best result? The rules of modern craft and time-serving morality are difficult, because they are inconsistent, but honesty is simple and clear as the sunlight! It takes years to make a clever lawyer—divine grace, however, can make an honest man in an hour. Brethren, believe me, *policy* is

not *wisdom*, and craft is not understanding. Let me give you the case of another woman—Rebecca. Rebecca heard that God had decreed that her favorite son, Jacob, should be ruler of the two. “The elder shall serve the younger.” She could not wait for God’s providence to fulfill God’s purpose—but thought she must deceive her blind husband! She dresses up her son with skins of goats, and wool; provides the savory meat, and sends Jacob, who was, though a good man, the very picture of a political and prudent professor, to meet his father, and to deceive him. Ah, if Rebecca had been wise, she would not have done this! Little did she foresee that the effect of this stratagem would be to drive her favorite son away from her, give him years of toil under Laban, cause him to make the greatest mistake of his life—the commission of the error of polygamy—and make him a far more afflicted man than he might have been had he been like Abraham or Isaac, who leaned not to their own understandings, but trusted in God with all their hearts! Brothers and sisters, you shall never find in any case that any turning aside from a straightforward course will be for your profit! After all, you may depend on it, that the way to be most renowned among men is to have the strange singularity of being a downright honest man. Say what you mean; mean what you say. Do what you believe to be right, and always hold it for a maxim. If the skies fall through your doing right, honest men will survive the ruin! How can the godly sin? If the earth should reel, would he fail? No, blessed be God, he would find himself in the honorable position of David of old, when he said, “The earth is removed; I bear up the pillars thereof.”

But now the serpent changes his tune, and he says, “Well, if you are not sinful or crafty, at any rate, to succeed in life you must be very *careful*. You must fret and worry, and think much about it. That is the way to handle a matter wisely. Why,” he

says, “look how many are ruined from want of thought, and want of care? Be you careful over it. Rise up early, sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness. Stint yourself, deny yourself. Do not give to the poor; be a miser, and you shall succeed. Take care. Watch— be thoughtful.” And this is the path of wisdom according to him. My brethren, it is a path which very many have tried, very many have persevered in it all their lives! But I must say to you this is not handling a matter wisely after all! God forbid we should say a single word against prudence and care, and necessary forethought, industry, and providence. These are virtues; they are not only commendable, but a Christian’s character would be sadly at fault if he had them not. But when these are looked upon as the foundations—the staple materials of success—men are desperately in error! It is vain for you in that sense to rise up early, and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness, for “so He gives His beloved sleep.” Oh, there are many who have realized that picture of old Care, which old Spenser gives in his Fairy Queene—

“Rude was his garment, and to rags all rent;
No better had he, nor for better cared;
With blistered hands, among the cinders burnt,
And fingers filthy, with long nails uncared,
Right fit to rend the food before which he fared—
His name was Care—a blacksmith by his trade,
That neither day nor night from working spared,
But to small purpose iron wedges made—
Those are unquiet thoughts that careful minds invade.”

Who wishes to have that picture come true of himself? I would infinitely rather that we could be photographed as being like Luther’s birds, which ate upon the tree, and sang—

“Mortal cease from care and sorrow,
God provides for the morrow.”

Care is good, mark—if it is good care! But care is ill when it comes to be ill care, and it is ill care if I dare not cast it upon Him who cares for me! Cotton has well said of covetous earthworms, “After hypocrites, the greatest dupes the devil has are those who exhaust an anxious existence in the disappointments and vexations of business, and live miserably and meanly, only to die magnificent and rich. For, like the hypocrites, the only disinterested action these men can accuse themselves of is that of serving the devil without receiving his wages—he that stands every day of his life behind a counter until he drops from it into the grave, may negotiate many very profitable bargains; but he has made a single bad one, so bad indeed, that it counter-balances all the rest; for the empty foolery of dying rich he has paid down his health, his happiness, and his integrity.”

Once again—there is another way of handling a matter wisely which is often suggested to young men, and suggested, too, I am sorry to say, by Christians who little know that they are giving Satanic advice. “Well,” they say, “young man, if you will not be exceedingly careful, and watch night and day, at least be *self-reliant*. Go out and tell the world that you are a match for it, and that you know it; that you mean to carve your way to glory, and to build yet for yourself an edifice at which men shall gaze! Say to the little men round about you, ‘I mean to tower above you all, and bestride this narrow world like a Colossus.’ Be independent young men! Rest on yourselves! There is something wonderful in you—quit yourselves like men. Be strong!” Well, brothers and sisters, there are many who have tried this self-reliance, and their deception in this case has been fearful, too—for when the day of fiery trial has come, they have

discovered that, “Cursed is he that trusts in man”—even though that man is *himself*—“and makes flesh his arm”—though it be his own flesh! Broken in pieces they have been left as wrecks upon the sand though they sailed out of the harbor with all their sails filled with the wind! They have come back like knights unhorsed and dishonored, though they went out with their lance in hand, and their proudly flaunting pennant—intending to push like the horns of unicorns—and drive the whole earth before them! No man was ever so much deceived by others as by himself! Be warned, Christians, that this is not handling a matter wisely!

But what, then, is the way of wisdom? The text answers the question—“He who trusts in the Lord, happy is he.” So, then, if I understand the text rightly, in temporal things, if we learn to trust in God, we shall be happy. We are not to be idle. That would show we did *not* trust in God—who works up to now—but in the devil, who is the father of idleness! We are not to be impudent and rash; that were to trust chance, and not to trust God, for God is a God of economy and order. We are to trust God, acting in all prudence, and in all uprightness, we are to rely simply and entirely upon Him. Now I have no doubt there are many here who say, “Well, that is not the way to get on in the world! That can never be the path of success—simply trusting in God.” Yes, but it is so—only one must have divine grace in the heart to do it. One must first be made a child of God, and then he can trust his affairs in his Father’s hands. One must come to depend upon the Eternal One, because the Eternal One has enabled him to use this Christian grace which is the fruit of the Holy Spirit! I am persuaded that faith is as much the rule of temporal, as of spiritual life, and that we ought to have faith in God for our shops as well as for our souls! Worldly men may sneer at this, but it is none the less true. At any rate, I pray that it may be my course as long as I live.

My dear friends let me commend to you a life of trust in God in temporal things by these few advantages among a great many others. First, trusting in God, you will not have to mourn because you have used sinful means to grow rich. Should you become poor through it—better to be poor with a clear conscience—than to be rich and guilty. You will always have this comfort should you come to the lowest position of nature that you have come there through no fault of your own. You have served God with integrity, and what if some should say you have missed your mark, not achieved to success? At least there is no sin upon your conscience!

And then, again, trusting God, you will not be guilty of self-contradiction. He who trusts in craft, sails this way today, and that way the next—like a vessel propelled by the fickle wind. But he who trusts in the Lord is like a vessel propelled by steam—she cuts through the waves, defies the wind—and makes one bright silvery track to her destined haven! Be you such a man as that—never bow to the varying customs of *worldly* wisdom. Let men see that the world has changed, not you—that man's opinions, and man's maxims have veered round to another quarter, but that you are still invincibly strong in the strength which trusting in God alone can confer! And then, dear brothers and sisters let me say you will be delivered from care, you will not be troubled with evil tidings, and your heart will be fixed trusting in the Lord. I have read a story of an old Doctor of the Church, who, going out one morning, met a beggar and said to him, "I wish you a good day." "Sir," he said, "I never had a bad day in any life." "But," said the Doctor, "your clothes are torn to rags, and your wallet seems to be exceedingly empty." Said he, "My clothes are as good as God wants them to be, and my wallet is as full as the Lord has been pleased to make it—and what pleases Him, pleases me." "But," said the Doctor, "suppose God should cast you into hell?"

“Indeed, sir,” he said, “but that could never be! But if it were, I would be contented, for I have two long and strong arms—faith and love—and I would throw these about the neck of my Savior, and I would never let Him go, so that if I went *there*, He would be with me, and it would be a heaven to me!” Oh, those two strong arms of faith and love! If you can but hang about the Savior’s neck, indeed, you may fear no ill weathers! No fatal shipwreck shall I fear, for Christ is in my vessel—He holds the helm and holds the winds, too—

“Though winds and waves assault my keel,
He does preserve it, He does steer,
Even when the boat seems most to reel!
Storms are the triumphs of His care,
Sure He may close His eyes, but not His heart.”

The practical lesson from all this is—“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not to your own understanding.” Whatever your trouble is, take it to God this morning—do not bear it till the night! Whatever your difficulty and peculiar exercise of mind, tell it unto the Lord, your God. He is as able as He is willing, and as willing as He is able. Having sent the trial, He will surely make a way of escape for you!

II. But now, I turn to the second part of our discourse. **IN SPIRITUAL MATTERS, HE WHO HANDLES A MATTER WISELY SHALL FIND GOOD.**

But what is the right way of handling this dread matter which stands between our soul and God? We have immortal spirits, and spirits that are responsible. The day of judgment draws near, and with it heaven’s happiness, or hell’s torment. What, my brothers and sisters, shall we do to handle this matter wisely? And here comes up the old serpent again, and he says, “Young man, the easiest way to handle this matter is to let it

alone altogether! You are young as yet—there is plenty of time—why put old heads on young shoulders? You will have need enough to think of religion, by-and-by, but at present, you see, it will be much in your way. Better leave it alone. It is only these ministers that try and make you thoughtful— but they only bother you and trouble you—so drop it! You can think of it, if there is anything in it, by-and-by, but for the present, rejoice in your youth, and let your joy be in the morning of your days— for the evil days come—and then let your thoughtfulness come with them.”

Well now, young man, young woman, does this strike you, after all, as being the wisest course? I will tell you one thing— whatever you may think of it—such a course as that is the direct road to hell! Do you know the road to heaven? Well, it might take us some little time to tell you about *that*, but if you want to go to hell, we will tell you that in one moment! You need not go and swear; you need not be drunk; you need not become a monster in iniquity, or a fiend in cruelty. No, no, it is easier than that! It is just a little neglect—that is all—and your soul is lost for sure! Remember how the apostle puts it, “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation?” Now, can that which is the surest road to hell be a wise way? I think I may leave it with your reason. Certainly I may leave it with your conscience; you know it is not the right way! Yes, and I have noticed this—that men and women who laugh most at religion when they are well and are most careless—are the most frightened when they meet with a little accident! If they have a little illness, oh, how bad they feel! It is an awful thing for them to be ill! They know it is—they are dreadfully shaken; and the strangest thing is that the minister they hated most when they were well—becomes the very man they have the most faith in—and most long to see when they become sick! I know when the cholera was here last, there was a certain man for whom no word in the English

language could be found that was bad enough to describe me! But in the cholera, when he lay sick, who did he send for? The clergyman of the parish? No, certainly not! Who did he send for? Some minister of good repute? No—send for the man whom he had before cursed; and until that man should come and speak to him, and offer prayer, he could not even indulge a hope—though, alas, poor soul, I fear he had no hope even then! Yet, so it is. God will honor His ministers; He will prove the utter futility of man's brag and boast. You may be careless, sir, while you are well; you may neglect this great salvation, but a little sickness shall make you tremble, and your knees shall shake, and you shall be convulsed with agony, and find that this is not handling the matter wisely! You are something like a bankrupt who knows that his accounts are going wrong, and fears that he is insolvent, so he does not look at his books. He does not like to look at them, for there is no very pleasant reading there; there may be a few assets, but the entries are mostly on the other side—and so at last he does not keep any books at all—it would be troublesome to him to know where he was! So is it with you. It is because things are not right, you do not like to sift them and try them—lest you should find out the black reality! Be wise, I pray you, and look a little beyond you. Why shut your eyes and perish? Man, I charge you by the living God, awake, or hell shall wake you! Look, man, or eternity shall soon amaze you.

But Satan comes to some, and he says, “If you won't be careless, the next easiest thing is to be credulous. There,” he says, “is a man over there with a shaved head who says he'd manage the thing for you. Now, *he* ought to know! Does not he belong to a church that has an infallible head? Give yourself up to him,” he says, “and it will be all right! Or,” says he, “I hate popery, but there is a clergyman, let him give you the sacrament—rely upon him, and it will be all safe! Or,” says he,

“if you could but join the church and be baptized; there, that will do—take it for granted that it is all right. Why should you trouble yourself with theological squabbles? Let these things alone! Be credulous; don’t search into the root of the matter; be content as long as you swim on the surface, and do not care whether there are rocks down deep at the bottom of the sea.” And is this the way—is this the way to handle this matter wisely? Assuredly not, sir! Better trust a lawyer with your property, than a priest with your soul! Better hand your purse to a highwayman upon the heath, than commit your soul to a Romish priest! What will he do for you but make his penny of you, and your soul may be penniless for him? So shall it be with the best of men if you make saviors of them. Go, lean upon a reed! Go, build a throne of bubbles! Go, sleep in a powder magazine with your candle burning in a bag of gunpowder—but do not trust even a good man with your soul! See to it that you handle this matter wisely, and you cannot do it thus.

“Ah, well,” says Satan, “if this will not do, then try the way of working out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Do good,” he says, “say a great many prayers perform a great many good works, and this is handling the matter wisely.” Now, I will take you to Switzerland for a minute, to give you a picture. There was a poor woman who lived in one of those sweet villages under the Alps, where the fountains are always pouring out their streams of water into the great stone tanks, and the huge overhanging roofs cover the peasant homes. She had been accustomed to climb the mountain to gather fodder for her cows, and she had driven her goats to the wild crags, and the sheer solitudes, where no sound is heard except the tinkling of the bell. She, good soul, had read nothing but the Bible, and her dreams and thoughts were all of heavenly things, and she dreamed thus—that she was walking along a smooth meadow—where there were many fair flowers, and much soft

grass. The pathway was smooth, and there were thousands wending their way along it, but they took no notice of her. She seemed alone. Suddenly the thought crossed her that this was the path to destruction, and these were selfish sinners. She sought another way, for she feared to meet their doom. She saw a path up the mountain-side exceedingly steep and rugged, as mountain paths are, but up this she saw men and women carrying tremendous burdens, as some of us have seen them carry them, till they stoop right down under the tremendous weight, as they climb the stony staircase. Here there was a tree across the road, and there a bramble, and there a brook was gushing down the mountain-side, and the path was lined with stones and she slipped. So she turned aside again. But those who went up the hill looked at her with such sorrow, that she turned back again, and began to climb once more—only to find the way rough and impossible. She turned aside again into the green meadow, but the climbers seemed to be very sad. Though they pitied her, she did not pity them, for their toil made them wet with perspiration and faint with fatigue. She dreamed she went along the green meadow till she came to a fair house out of which looked a bright spirit. The side of the house where she was, was all windows without a door, and the spirit said to her, “You have come the wrong road; you cannot come in this way; there is no entrance here,” and she woke. She told a Christian woman who visited her of this dream, and said, “I am sorely troubled, for I cannot go up that mountain path, I know. I understand that to be the way of holiness, but I cannot climb it—and I fear that I shall choose the green meadow—and when I come at last to the gates of heaven, they will tell me that is not the way, and I cannot enter there.” So her kind instructress said to her, “I have not dreamed, but I have read in my Bible this morning, that one day when the corn was ripening, and the sun was shining brightly, there went three men out of a city

called Jerusalem. One of them was the Savior of the world, and the other two were thieves. One of the thieves, as he hung upon the cross, found his way to the bright city of heaven. And it was said, 'Today shall you be with Me in Paradise.' Did he go up that hilly path, do you think?" "No," said the poor woman, "he believed, and was saved." "Ah," said her friend, "and this is *your* way to heaven! That hilly path you cannot climb—those who were ascending it with so much labor—perished before they reached the summit! Tottering from some dizzy height, they were dashed to pieces upon some jagged rock. Believe, and this shall be the path of salvation for you." And so I come to the poor soul and I say—if you would handle matters rightly, happy is he who trusts in the Lord. You have done the right thing for eternity, with all its solemnities, when you have cast your soul, just as it is, on Him who is "able to save to the uttermost them who come unto God by Him."

And let me now tell you what are the advantages of doing so. That man who believes in Christ, and can say, "Salvation is finished. All is of Christ, and all is free! My faith is in Jesus Christ, and in Him alone"—that man is freed from fears! He is not afraid to die—Christ has finished the work for him; he is not afraid to live, he shall not perish—for his soul is in Jesus Christ! And he is not afraid of trial, or of trouble, for He who bought him with His blood, shall keep him with His arm. He is free from present fears, and he is free from present cares, too. He has no need to toil and labor, to fret and strive, to do this or to do that. He feels no more the whip of the slave driver on his back. His life is happy, and his service light; the yoke he wears, he scarcely knows to be a yoke. The road is pleasant, and the path is peace—no climbing upwards except as angel hands assist him to climb the road which else no mortal feet could traverse! He is free, too, from all fatal delusion. He is not a deceived man; he shall never open his eyes to find himself

mistaken; he has something which shall last him as long as life shall last—which shall be with him when he wakes from his bed of clay, to conduct him joyously to realms of light and endless day! This man is such a man that if I compared him with the very angels, I should not do amiss. He is on earth, but his heart is in heaven; he is here below, but he sits together with Christ in heavenly places. He has his troubles, but they work his lasting good; he has his trials, but they are only the precursors of victory; he has weakness, but he glories in infirmity because the Power of Christ does rest upon him! He is sometimes cast down, but he is not destroyed. He is perplexed—he is not in despair. He does not grovel, but he walks upright; his feet may be in the mire, but his eyes are above the stars! His body may be covered with rags, but his soul is robed in the light of God. He may go to a miserable pallet to find an uneasy rest—but his soul sleeps in the bosom of his beloved, and he has a perfect peace—“a peace which passes all understanding, which keeps his heart and mind through Jesus Christ.” Christians, I would that you and I could believe God better, and get rid of these wicked fears of ours! Gracious Father, I do today cast all I have on You, and all I have not, too, I would cast on You. My cares, my sorrows, my labors, my joys, my present, my past, my future—take You and manage all. I will be nothing, You my all—

“O God, I cast my care on You,
I triumph and adore,
Henceforth my chief concern shall be.
To love and serve You more.”

Brothers and sisters, believers in Jesus, do the same, and you shall find that happy is the man who trusts in the Lord! As for you who fear not the Lord Jesus—may His Holy Spirit visit

you this morning! May He quicken you, for you are dead in sin! May He give you power, for you have no strength of yourselves! Remember, the way of salvation is simple, and plain before you—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Trust my Master's blood, depend upon His finished righteousness, and you must, you *shall* be saved; you cannot, you *will not be lost*—

"Oh believe the promise true
God to you His Son has given."

Depend on His Son, and you shall thus escape from hell, and find your path to heaven.

The Lord add now His own best blessing for Jesus' sake.
Amen.

393 THE CHURCH – CONSERVATIVE AND AGGRESSIVE – I TIM. 3:15

**A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Morning, May 19th, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

“The Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” — I Timothy 3:15

YOU WILL REMEMBER it was announced last Sunday that a collection would be made today in behalf of our institution for training young men for the ministry. It has been thought desirable that I should state a few particulars relative to the institution. Some of them will appear in the course of the sermon. It may suffice for me to say now that some five or six years ago one of the young men of the Church gave promise of being a successful minister if he could but have a good education. With the assistance of a friend in the Church, I undertook to take him under my charge, put him under a suitable tutor, and train him for the ministry. So successful, by God's grace, was that work, that I was induced to take another, and another, and another. Up to now I have been myself the committee, secretary, treasurer, and subscriber. I have not, except in one or two instances, even mentioned the matter to anyone, but have been content to provide everything that I could out of my own income, besides that which is necessary for the support of my household, in order to educate any young men who might become ministers of the cross of Christ. There

are now seven settled out, all of whom have been eminently successful. They are probably not men who will become great or brilliant, but they have been good and useful preachers. I think there are not another seven in the whole Baptist denomination who have had so many converts during the years that they have been settled! They have been the means, most of them, in the hands of God, of adding a very considerable number every year to the churches where they have settled. Those are churches not in provincial towns but in villages. I have, therefore, been led still further to increase my number, and I think I have now about 16 young men wholly to support and maintain. Besides these, there is a very considerable number who receive their education in the evening, though they still remain in their own callings. With the enlarged sphere we now occupy as a Church, I have proposed so to enlarge my scheme that all the members of this Church and congregation who happen to be deficient in the plain rudiments of knowledge, can get an education—a common English education for themselves. Then, if they display any ability for speaking—without giving up their daily avocations—they shall have classes provided for higher branches of instruction. But should they feel that God has called them to the ministry, I am then prepared, after the use of my own judgment, and the judgment of my friends, as to whether they are fit persons to give them two years' special tutorship that they may go forth to the work of the cross, thoroughly trained so far as we can effect it in so short a time. I know I am called to this work, and I have had some most singular interpositions of Providence in providing funds for it.

At the day of judgment the world shall know that there has never lived a man upon the face of the earth who has less deserved the slander of seeking to enrich himself than I have! I shall say no more upon that. Let the world scandalize me if it

will. I need the money today, not for myself in any respect. I give my services and my work freely, and of my own income all that I can spare. I only want my friends who feel interested in this work to assist me that we may provide men who shall preach the gospel to multitudes who are longing to hear it fully and faithfully proclaimed! Permit me to say, there was held in Westminster Abbey last Thursday a grand choral festival, at which there were singers from the various choirs of London—St. Page, the Abbey, the Temple, and the Foundling, and some from Windsor. Several ecclesiastical dignitaries graced the assembly. Anthem and cantatas, and I know not what else, were performed on a most classic scale! The sermon was preached by a Provost of some college in which the claims of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts were eloquently advocated, and the whole collection amounted to 70 pounds! “A very poor result for so sublime a service,” said the *Times* report. Last Friday evening there was held a little meeting in one of the rooms here of about 40 or 50 of the seat holders in this congregation. There were no bishops present. There were only a few street preachers, and my poor students. They addressed that little meeting, and though no collection was called for or even contemplated, those friends spontaneously subscribed 180 pounds as an earnest of what they were sure the congregation would give to this work today! I think this just shows that when people have a mind for Christ’s cause, they do not need to have the State to support their religion, but can support it out of the generosity of loving hearts without the elaborate parade of gorgeous rituals!

I shall now invite your attention to the subject of this morning’s discourse which has a very strong bearing upon this point.

*“The Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth”—
1 Timothy 3:15.*

The word “Church” has suffered very much from the hands of men. Strangely, but frequently, has it been used to designate a mass of bricks and mortar. *Ecclesia*, a chosen assembly, has actually, by the natural debasement of the tongue of priests, come down to mean a *building*. By no possible construction can it mean any such a thing! A more debasing use of a divine word than *that* can scarcely be found! The word “Church” has also been used by many to signify the clergy. A young man is to enter the Church—that is, he is to take holy orders, to become a preacher, and an authorized dispenser of the “sacraments,” as they are called. He is to aspire after an incumbency, and is to be recognized as an ordained minister of the Word of God. Now, the word “Church” in Scripture means nothing like that! Such a use of terms is but confusion; it is taking God’s words, making and destroying their sense, and then using them for our own purpose. The “Church of Christ” according to the Scripture, is an assembly of faithful men. *Ecclesia* originally signified *assembly*. Not a mob, but an assembly of persons who were called together on account of their special right to meet for the discussion of certain subjects. They were a called-out assembly. The “Church of God” itself, in its full sense, is a company of persons called out by the Holy Spirit from among the rest of mankind, banded together for the holy purpose of the defense, and the propagation of the truth of God. If there are but three or four, yet if they are so banded together in the fear of God, they are, to all intents and purposes, a Church; and if they should happen to number thousands, they are no more a Church on account of their numbers—a Church being a company of faithful men! To our minds, the Scripture seems very explicit as to how this Church should be ordered. We believe that every Church member should have equal rights and privileges. We believe that there is no power in Church officers to execute *anything* unless they have the full

authorization of the members of the Church. We believe, however, that the Church should choose its pastor, and having chosen him, they should love him, and respect him for his work's sake; that with him should be associated the deacons of the Church to take the oversight of pecuniary matters; and the elders of the Church to assist in all the works of the pastorate in the fear of God, being overseers of the flock. Such a Church we believe to be Scripturally ordered; and if it abides in the faith—rooted, grounded, and settled—such a Church may expect the benediction of heaven, and so it shall become the pillar, and ground of the truth.

But what is intended in our text by saying that the Church of God is the pillar and ground of the truth? When you go outside this building you may observe the use of a pillar; and that part of it which forms a basement upon which the circular stone rests, exactly answers to what the apostle means by the ground of the truth! It is the business of the Church, of course, to uphold the truth of God in its deep foundations; to conserve and preserve it intact—thus it is the ground. To lift it up and bear it aloft in beauty, and in all its fair proportions, in this the Church, of course, is the pillar of the truth. Some commentators say that as pillars were used of old to bear inscriptions, as upon pillars even the bronze decrees of the Roman Senate were exhibited to the people, so the Church of Christ is intended to be a pillar bearing the inscription of the truth, so that it not only maintains it, and upholds it, but sets it forth! At any rate, I think you will perceive in a moment that the simple meaning of my text is just this—it is the business of the Church of God to maintain, to propagate, to uphold, to spread, and to defend the truth as it is in Jesus—wherever that Church may be placed!

I shall use the text, this morning, in four ways. First, *to correct certain mistakes*; secondly, *to convince judgments of the excellence*

of God's ordinance in this matter; thirdly, to awake reflections upon the subject; and fourthly, to suggest some ways of making this Church, and every Church, the pillar and ground of the truth.

I. First, then, my brothers and sisters, LET US CORRECT SOME FEW MISTAKES.

We are all deeply impressed with the importance of maintaining the doctrines of the gospel, and the truths of Christ, pure and simple as we find them in the New Testament. There are brethren who in their extreme anxiety to accomplish this end, suggest methods which are not warranted by the text; for the rule here laid down is that the Church is itself to maintain, and to be the guardian of the truth. But these brethren, in their great anxiety to maintain it, have suggested other ways. One of the first has been the drawing up of a creed. The articles of the faith shall be written out clearly and unmistakably. At a general synod every word of these articles shall be argued—any discrepancy shall be removed—and the articles shall, as nearly as possible, express the orthodox creed. It is done. The ministers assembled go home, and say that creed will be the pillar and ground of the truth; as long as ever the name of the Westminster Assembly Confession shall be known, the truth will be safe! As long as the 39 articles of the Church of England shall stand, that Church must be free from error! Ah, how signally they have failed! Especially let us take the glaring instance of the Church of England. The articles of the Church of England are Calvinistic. No person who is not deluded, or dishonest, can read them without seeing that the pen was dipped in Geneva ink which wrote those articles! And yet how many Church of England clergy are as far from anything like Calvinism, as the wildest Pelagian could be supposed to be? There are, it is true, and God be glorified for it, many brothers who do believe these articles, and preach them faithfully, too. We love them, and honor them for the truth's sake. But is there

one in ten? No, is there one in 10 who really receives those articles in their pure and simple meaning? If this were all, it were not so bad; but men have had the impudence to subscribe to those articles of the Church, when they have not believed a single one of them—and have been infidels! You have had of late, and it is not necessary for me to allude to the matter, a glaring proof that no articles whatever can conserve and maintain the truth of God; for men will sign them when they do not believe a word they set forth!

We have been led to think we have grown a little wiser, and we have tried to maintain the truth by our trust deeds. Our friends have, as they thought, put the truth in the trust deeds; and it is enacted that if a minister does not preach the doctrines, the trustees shall see that he is dismissed! Ah, a very poor pillar and ground of truth this is! Our strict Baptist brothers—I am not now about to enter into the question whether they are right or wrong, but supposing they are right for the moment—they have been exceedingly wise in putting the strict Baptist clause into their trust deed! I am not now about to dispute the verdicts of the judges, but their clauses have been broken, and their bands have been like green twigs! I know a chapel now in Norfolk which has on the forefront over the door, these words printed in stone, “For the strict Baptists forever.” Really there is something fine and heroic in that—but equally ridiculous and absurd! The place will not be for the strict Baptists forever; nor will any trust deed ever be so written but that you may drive a coach and horses through, just as surely as you can through an Act of Parliament! That never was and never will be the way to maintain the truths of God! Let it be done if you like, but do not imagine that your trust deed is a pillar and ground of the truth!

We have fallen into a similar mistake with regard to the diffusion of the truth. In order to spread the doctrines of the

gospel, we have formed societies. There are missionary societies appended to every denomination. These societies are to be pillars and grounds of the truth, not so much in the maintenance of the truth as in the spreading of it. To become a member of a missionary society, you have only to subscribe to it. If you were a very infidel and subscribed, you would become a member! Nothing whatever is required of you, but that you should simply give a certain amount of money, and you become a member of that society. We have been wondering why our societies have not greater success. I believe the reason is because there is not a single word in the Book of God about anything of the kind! The Church of God is the pillar and ground of the truth—not a society! The Church of God never ought to have delegated to any society whatever, a work which it behooved her to have done herself. Instead of sending our subscriptions to associations, we ought to have picked our own men out of our own midst, and found the means to send them forth to preach the truth as it is in Jesus, ourselves! We have given up the work of the education of our young men to our colleges. I will not say they have done it ill. But I do dare say they have not done it well! The reason, I think, has been because there is nothing in the Word of God that could warrant their accepting the trust! The Church of God, not a college, is the pillar and ground of the truth! Every Church should itself see to the education of its own young men. It should look out for its own evangelism—should train its own soldiers, and send them forth to the fight. The Church of God will never see things done rightly, if shirking her own responsibility; she tries to cast it upon other men! Yes, even if those men could be the best of men, if they were angelic, if you could find superhuman beings—yet if God never called them to the work, He will not, therefore, honor them in it! The Church, the Church, the Church of God, the assembly of

believers is, according to God's Word, to hold forth His truth, and to be the pillar and ground of the truth!

Many have thought, however, that the truth would be quite safe in the hands of ministers. If we could not leave its preaching to the society, at least let the minister, so intimately connected with the Church, become the pillar and ground of the truth! It is a melancholy fact that heresy never began with the people yet—but with the minister. And I speak what I know—the hearts of the people of our denomination are sounder in the truth than the hearts of the preachers. There is not a denomination under heaven which has a more sincere love to all Calvinistic doctrines than our own. Yet how many of our ministers there are who, while they do not preach against them, and I hope secretly believe them, are, nevertheless silent upon the subject? They keep it back, perhaps imagining it would not be profitable to their hearers. But there is scarcely a Church in London in which there are not men and women grumbling, groaning and murmuring, because the full truth is not preached to them, and they do not hear the Word by which alone they live! There are Churches in London where the truth is fully preached, praised be God, and there you will find none who are groaning because they are famished. But there is not a Church of the other sort in which there are not many disaffected persons who are thoroughly ready to come out at any moment, and leave their minister if he will not give them the whole truth, instead of keeping part of it back! You must not trust the ministry, brothers and sisters! If you rely upon us, you will rely upon broken reeds! However honest we may be, yet we have not to deal so much with the world, and with its cares, and troubles as you. And I think your dealing with the world casts you back very often upon the old, solid realities—because in the hard daily struggle which you have to carry on, you need to have the finest of the wheat to sustain your

strength! Let us uplift, this morning, as a great truth which the Church has too much forgotten, the words of the text, “The Church of the living God is the pillar and ground to maintain the truth.” Do not trust deeds, nor Church articles! The Church of the living God is the pillar to set forth and proclaim the truth; not the ministry; not societies; not authors; not any set of men to whom it can be delegated, but the Church of God—and the Church of God alone!

Now do not misunderstand me. I would not say a single word against any society for the spread of God's truth. But I must repeat again, that all societies of that sort spring from an irregular and unscriptural position of the Church. THE Church, if she were in her right state, would do the whole of the work herself! The city missionary would be a member of the Church sent out and supported by the Church itself. The missionary to foreign lands would have the Church at his back to whom he would look for support, both in prayers and in subscriptions. Every work would be performed—not through this secretary or that—but through the Church itself! This, I believe, is the principle which will work a radical cure in all the errors that have been made, and bring back the state and system of evangelization into a proper and healthy condition. I may be wrong, but this has deeply laid upon my soul; and I shall never be satisfied till I see in this Church an organization so complete that it does not need a supplement—able to do every good work, and fulfill every necessary office of itself and by itself—welcoming always the cooperation of others—but never needing to depend upon a society for the accomplishment of any purpose to which the Lord God has been pleased to call it.

II. I shall now pass on to my second point. Let us note **THE WISDOM OF GOD IN MAKING THIS MATTER SO—**presuming, of course—that we have thus far rightly interpreted the will of God concerning us.

The Church of God in Scripture is called a mother. What is a mother's business? What is a mother's duty? A mother's duty is to feed her own child from her own bosom. She loses a joy herself, and inflicts a serious injury upon her offspring when, if having the ability, she lacks the affection which would compel her to support her own child from the fountains which God Himself has opened. And as the Church of Christ is a mother, she shall lack the greatest joy, and lose the sweetest privilege unless she herself trains her own children, and gives them the unadulterated milk of the Word of God. She has no right to put her children out to nurse. How shall they love her? What affection shall they bear towards her? No, let her do as she should, and keep her children at home, and supply them herself. It is a mother's business, as that child grows up, to train and teach it. Let her teach it the first letters of the alphabet. Let it gather its first knowledge of Christ from a mother's lips. Who so fit to teach as she that brought it forth? None can teach so sweetly and none so effectually as she. Let her not give up the training of her child to another. And why should we, the Church of Christ, give up our children when we first taught them to speak in Christ's name, to be trained and to be taught by others? No, by every motherly feeling that remains within the bosom of Christ's Church, let us see her children brought up at her own knees, rocked there in her own lap, and not give up the work of training her sons and daughters to others! And who so fit as the mother of the family to inspire her son with holy ardor when at last he goes forward to the battle of life? Who shall give him the affectionate advice? Who shall give him the cheering word which shall sustain him in the hour of difficulty as well as a mother whom he loves? And let the Church of God, when her young men go forth to her battles, put her hand upon their shoulders and say, "Be strong, young man, be strong. Dishonor not the mother who bore you; but

go forth, and like the son of a Spartan mother, return not but in glory! Go forth to conquer or to die. Come back on your shield, or with it—a hero or a martyr.” Who can speak the words so well, and sing at home as powerfully as the mother to her son, or the Church to her child? The Church, then, has no right to delegate to another her own work! Let her bring forth her own children; let her give them nourishment; let her train them up; let her send them forth to do the Master’s work!

But, then, my brothers and sisters, the Church is often compared to a city. Christians are the citizens. Who so fit to fight the battles of a country as the countrymen themselves? Shall we give up to a tribe of mercenaries the defense of this stalwart island? Shall we hire foreigners from afar, and say to them, “Dash the invader from our own shores”? No, my brothers and sisters, Britain’s true hearts would wake up, and Britain’s strong arms would wield the weapon if invasion should ever take place! The liberties of a country are not safe with an army, but with the citizens themselves. We must be our own defenders if the land is to be preserved. No body of troops more fit than those who fight for their own children, their own wives, their own hearths, and the altars of their own land! Shall we, then, the Church of God, seek out others besides our own citizens? Shall we give the command of our armies to those who belong not to us? Shall we send our sons and daughters out to be enrolled in other armies? No! In the name of the living God, let the Church of Christ train her own citizens for the battle of Christ! Let her bring up her own young warriors for the defense and maintenance of the truth. Besides, who is there who will naturally care for this matter like the Church? My dear brothers and sisters, if I were the minister of a society, I would be in a miserable plight. What would the society care for me? What would they care about what I did if there could be but a smart report sent in at the end of the year to be read

at the public meeting amid the clapping of hands and so forth? The secretary would smile upon me, but what would they care for me? What prayers would I have from the subscribers? How would I be likely to be carried on the heart of the secretary? Good man, he has 20 other agents to think of—how should he be thinking of *me*? But I am a minister of a Church, and there is not one member of this Church but what prays for me! I know that as often as you bow your knees at the family altar, you mention my name as you mention the name of your son and your daughter! Many a proof have I had from you that I am as much loved by you as if I were your brother according to the flesh! Your prayers make me strong! Your sympathies make me blest! They cheer my heart, and bear me up amidst the waves of slander! And who shall care for anything when God and the Church are with him? So, then, if it is so with a minister, it must be very much more so with a missionary in the foreign land. “Why,” he says, “who will pray for me? The Missionary Society has sent me out. The secretary knows about me. He reads my letters when I send them to him; they are put in the magazine.” But suppose some young man from these galleries was sent out to preach the Word—why we should all notice him! When the letter came from John So-and-So at Canton, and we read it at the prayer meeting, how we would pray for him! We would feel he was one of ourselves! And when we made the collection for his support, we would give far more liberally than for another whom we never saw, who had no connection with us and—however good the man might be—was not a personal friend of ours!

The Church of God can naturally care for the state of her own ministers and her own missionaries— and a minister, a missionary, cannot hope to be greatly blest till they are under the Church—and not under a society! Just so with the young men for the ministry; when they go to college, they do not, I

suppose, expect many people to care about them there. But with regard to those we have in our midst, why there is nothing that any of you would not cheerfully do for them! As soon as there is a new face seen among them, some of the elders of the Church are sure to get him into their houses—are sure to speak kindly with him till I fall into another difficulty. Sometimes my friends take them away too much, are too kind to them, get them away from their studies in order to be with them—when they ought rather to be sticking fast by their books! I find no lack of sympathy, and I know the men are happier; and I believe they have greater motives to be holy because they are more watched, more observed by the members of the Church! Anything which they do ill would reflect discredit upon the whole of us, and when they do that which is right and honorable, there is a sort of *esprit de corps* which makes them long to distinguish themselves—that the whole Church may share in the honor of their connection! I am persuaded that this is a right principle, and I shall not cease to advocate it unless I find arguments by which it can be disproved. And after all, my brothers and sisters, who should care for the cause of Christ like the Church? Oh, what reason you and I have for loving Christ's cause! Dear have been the places where we have worshipped, some of us, for there we first found a Savior. Some of you, not long ago, were the servants of sin and Satan—you were at a distance from God—and you loved that distance well! Could we not cast our eyes around, and remember how some of you were drunks and swearers, and such like? But you are washed, you are sanctified! And now you rejoice in Him who loved you, for He has washed you in His own blood! Now you can sing of pardoning grace and dying Love. Who, like you, my brothers, to propagate the gospel? Who makes such preachers as these Pauls, who preach the faith which they once destroyed? Who will stand so well at the back of every agent for Christ as

those who have themselves tasted and felt and handled the good Word of Life? Truly the Word of God is safe in the hands of the Church, when the Church lives near to God! When you are sensible of your gratitude to Christ; when you are conscious of your obligations to eternal and sovereign mercy, then it is that you will be pillars of the truth! And you will maintain and uphold it, not shunning to declare the whole counsel of God, not hesitating to support those who endeavor to do it in your names. Thus the Church is made the salt of the earth, and the light of the world—irrespective of any society whatever—“The Church of God is the pillar and ground of the truth.”

III. Thirdly, this topic AWAKENS REFLECTION.

“Well,” says one, “I am afraid it would not work.” That is it, my brethren; that is just the hitch in the whole matter; it would not work. “We have got machinery,” said a brother to me once, “we have got machinery in our Church which will go on just as well, whatever the characters of the members may be.” “Then,” I said to him, “depend upon it, yours is not that which God has ordained.” For it seems to me that the most Scriptural system of Church government is that which requires the most prayer, the most faith, and the most piety to keep it going! The Church of God was never meant to be an automaton. If it were, the wheels would all act of themselves. The Church was meant to be a *living* thing, a living person, and as the person cannot be supported if life is absent, or if food is kept back, or if breath is suspended— so should it be with the Church! There should be certain solemn necessities without which she ceases to be a Church—certain things which she must have, and without which she cannot do her work. I am glad that this difficulty is suggested at all, for it seems to me that if there were not this difficulty, it would not be God’s plan. “Well,” says one, “if you believe the Church is to do all this work, then the Churches cannot yet be what they should.” I am

glad you draw that inference, my brother, I am glad you do. “Why,” says one, “our Churches could not support a missionary, some of them hardly support their minister!” Just so, brethren, but that is just because they are in a wrong state. There is hardly a Church anywhere, but if the Spirit of God were poured upon it, might not do ten times as much for Christ as it is now doing! The fact is there may be some few Churches that are walking in the right road, but they are very few indeed. And the objection which you bring ought to be an objection against the state of the Church, and not against the plan itself—for it is possible for the Churches to maintain missionaries and minister—if they want to do it! “Well,” says one, “but a Church must be very watchful to find out young men for the ministry.” Just so, I am glad you say that, for a Church ought to be very watchful. “But the minister must have a good deal to do,” you say. Just so, and he ought to have a great deal to do! What is the use of a lazy minister? He is no good either to the world, to the Church, or to himself; he is a dishonor to the noblest profession that can be bestowed upon the sons of men! Let him have plenty to do; it will keep him out of mischief, and it would do him good. Too much to do may be an evil, but too little to do is a curse! Let him have much to do.

“But,” says another, “the minister ought to be a holy man, because if the young persons who associate with him learn ill manners, what then?” Just so, I am glad you say that. And so he should be a holy man. Amongst the Swiss, the Vaudois, and the Waldenses, every minister trains one young man. Those pastors or shepherds always have a younger brother to travel with them wherever they go. He watches the elder pastor, observes his ways, and listens to his holy prayers. He is inspired with his spirit, learns to tread the craggy mountains with him, and learns to defy the enemy through the courage which he sees in his elder brother. He learns lessons of wisdom which

are not to be learned from books, lessons of practical pastoral training which are not to be gathered from the best professors of the best colleges in the world! And thus the Swiss have always maintained a succession of men, perhaps not brilliant, but always useful—perhaps not popular, but always sound, and valiant in their defense of the truths of God! And should it not be so with the Church? If to carry it out, it needs a laborious ministry, so much the better; if it needs a holy and wise ministry, so much the better; no other man should be a minister at all! If it needs a watchful Church, and a prayerful Church, and a Church which consecrates liberally of its substance to the Lord, I say so much the better—for so ought every Church be! The only question is, are we in the right state, now, to accomplish all the Lord's purposes? If we are not, let us make it a matter of prayer that we may be brought into this state—for we are never healthy unless we are prepared to do whatever God calls us to do! We will be losing in our own spiritual enjoyment if we fail to have strength to carry out all the work which the Lord imposes upon us. The Lord never gives us more to do than we can do. We had the work of building this place, and many thought we could not do it—at last we thought we could—and by God's grace we did it. If we had 50 more such places to build, and the Lord laid it to our heart to build them, we could do it if we were in a right state. Our only lack of power is lack of grace. Give the Church grace, and she does not need a new banker! Give her grace, and she does not need then to have new ministers! Give her more grace, and she will not need the world's pitiful gold to endow her, and make her rich. Give her grace, and you have given her all she needs! In that one word, you shall have successful ministers, you shall have laborious agencies, you shall have benevolence pouring out its floods, and piety consecrating all its activities for Christ!

IV. Now I shall come to my last point. The last point is **BY WAY OF SUGGESTION.**

What can we do practically to carry out this plan? Brothers and sisters, before I answer that question, let me say there are some things we must take care of or else we cannot carry it out at all. We must watch lest the Church be adulterated by additions which are not an increase to her strength. We must be very careful that no thought of strife, no symptom of envy, no feeling of jealousy creep in. Up to now you have been as one man—undivided and indivisible. This is absolutely necessary in the Church for the carrying out of any of her purposes! Divided we should utterly fail! I remember a somewhat ludicrous incident which occurred to a Church in which there were great quarreling and bickerings. The minister and the deacons, and his people, were all at arm's length, and daggers drawn. It was determined at last, that the matter should come to a settlement, and it was by mutual consent given up to the judgment of a good Christian farmer, who lived in the neighborhood. He was to hear the case, and write an answer to be read at the next Church meeting. Our friend, the farmer, sat down to write his letter—at the same time he had a letter from a steward or tenant asking advice about his farm—and by a mistake, or rather by a blessed providence as God would have it, he put the wrong letters into the envelopes, so that the letter which was intended for the Church went to the steward, and that which was intended for the steward went to the Church! At the Church meeting, when they were all assembled, this letter was read to the Church; it ran thus—"Dear friend, mind you see to the hedges well. Keep them up as best you can, and take special care of the old black bull." Now that was a most extraordinary letter to write to a Church! It had been sent by mistake, but the minister thinking it was a *bona fide* piece of advice, said he could not understand it. Some brother got up

and said it was plain enough—it was meant that they must be very watchful as to whom they should receive into the Church. They must keep their hedges up, and see there were no gaps. “And,” he said, “by the ‘old black bull’ I have no doubt he means that spirit of Satan that would get in, and trouble and divide us.” So understanding it in that sense, they made up their differences, repaired their hedges, and were careful of “the old black bull.” Every Church must do the same, for before we can do anything for Christ, we must first be right at home! We must have peace within our borders. We must be filled with the finest wheat, or else He will not send forth His Word and make it to run very swiftly. This, I hope, will be well seen to.

What, then, are *we* to do? If the Church is to do all this, brothers and sisters, what are you and I to do? As for *me*, I must take heed unto myself. I am to be the leader of this people, constantly ministering to them in the Word of Life. I must take care that my dedication of myself, and all I have, to my Lord be so perfectly complete that I would not have an objection to them knowing what I do with all I have. I must so live that they can see right through me that I desire to serve my Master and serve Him alone. Then one and all of you must say, “What must I do?” Let each man finding his own proper niche, each seaman on board the vessel finding which rope he can best handle, or what part of the tackling he best understands, take his place. Then, come rocking tempests, let the ship reel; she is safe, for she is in the hands of God, and in the hands of faithful men, who know how to manage her right well.

The battle is to be fought, brethren. It is to be fought by Christ’s army, not by hirelings. What are you and I to do? I must stand at the front of the line, and wave my sword, and say, “Come on, comrades!” And you, with steady step advancing, with firm bold front maintaining every inch of the ground you take, and at last—rushing in one tremendous army straightway

to the thick of the fight—you must carry everything before you, and win the crown for King Jesus! England expects every man to do his duty, but the Church of God expects it more, and must and shall have it! By Him who shall judge the quick and the dead; by Him who bought you with His blood, I adjure you, Christian men and women, see to it that you stand, each of you in your place. Do, each of you, your own appointed work! And so shall Christ's Kingdom come, and His will be done on earth even as it is in heaven.

I think I hear a little murmuring going round the gallery, and especially stopping at some few of the pews. I will not indicate the brethren. They are saying, "I do not belong to the Church—what am I to do?" My brethren, the first thing you ought to do is to join the Church! You say you love the Lord Jesus Christ. Very well; if you neglect one duty, that does not excuse you from another! You are dying in a state of sin, as a Christian, if you omit the duty of joining yourself with the people of God! May I ask you, when the Church goes to the fight, will you tarry at home? "No," you say, "I will follow with you. I will do my work. I will go as one of the camp-followers." Yes, but somehow or other, those campfollowers are in a very unsatisfactory state because they are not under the discipline of the officers! And though some of them can fight well, a sort of guerilla warfare, yet we would be much stronger if we could have them in the ranks! Brethren, don't you think sometimes that the world may imagine that you mean to hold hard till you see which will win? Had you not better cast in your lot with us while the battle rages? Besides, what does the Master say?—"He that confesses Me before men, him will I confess." And what does He say to those who do *not* confess? "He that denies Me before men, him shall be denied of My Father which is in heaven." You do not wish for that, surely! Enlist, then! Put on your Lord's regimentals. True, you can fight His battle without

them, but I think you will be more in the path of obedience, and the path of safety, if you put on the garments of Christ, and the garments of His Salvation. Come! Whoever is on the Lord's side, let him join with the Lord's hosts! If you are not, stand back and do not dare to come! But if you are, the standard is lifted, the trumpets sound! Come, comrades! Who is for Christ? Soldiers, who is for the Lord God Omnipotent? Unfurl the standard afresh today! Jehovah- Nissi, the Lord is our banner, and who will stand back? Let us enroll ourselves beneath Him and say, "O Lord, go forth with our armies, and grant success, for the battle is great and without You we shall utterly fail, but with You we shall surely get the victory!"

I have preached, as you will perceive, then, to the Church only. I have said nothing to the unconverted. We cannot do 20 things at a time. But I would say this word before I sit down. Remember, my dear hearers, if you are not numbered with the friends of Christ, you are numbered with His enemies! Will you remember that? I do not mean, if you are not numbered with the visible Church—I mean this—if you do not love and serve Christ. He who is not with Him, is against Him—he who gathers not with Him, scatters abroad. You say you take neither side—it is impossible—you must be on one side or the other! Clear the field! There is no room here except for the two armies. Whoever is not with Christ is with Satan, and shall surely be trod down when the enemies of God are trod like straw for the dunghill! Sinner, be aware of this—that *God* is against you—and the hosts of God are against you! The Lord give you repentance! The Lord give you faith! And come to the Captain of salvation and ask Him to have mercy on you! Run down the old flag! Thank God it is not nailed to the mast! Let the black flag come down, and let the blood-red flag run up! Spirit of God, compel them to change masters! May they no more serve the black prince, Satan; but may they, by Your grace, serve

under His banner whose service is perfect freedom, and whose reward is everlasting life!

May the Lord bless each one of you, for Christ's sake!

394 “EVEN SO, FATHER!” – MATT. 11:25-26

A Sermon

Delivered on Sunday Morning, May 26th, 1861,

by the

REV. C. H. SPURGEON

At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

**“At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank You, Father,
Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things
from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes.
Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.” —
Matthew 11:25-26**

THAT IS a singular way with which to commence a verse—
“At that time Jesus answered.” If you will look at the context
you will not perceive that anybody had asked Him a question,
or that He was indeed in conversation with any human being.
Yet it says, “Jesus answered and said, I thank You, Father.”
Now when a man answers, he answers a person who has been
speaking to him! Who, then, had been speaking to Jesus? Why,
His Father! Yet there is no record of it; which should teach us
that Christ had constant fellowship with His Father, and often
did His Father silently speak into His ear. As we are in this
world even as Christ was, let us imitate this lesson. May we
likewise have silent fellowship with the Father, so that we may
often answer Him. And when the world knows not to whom
we speak, may we speak to God, and respond to that secret
voice which no other ear has heard—while our own ear—
opened by the Spirit of God has attended to it with joy! I like
the Christian to sometimes find himself obliged to speak out,

or if not to speak out, to feel an almost irrepressible desire to say something though no one is near, because a thought has been brought to him by the Holy Spirit—a suggestion has been cast into the midst of his soul by the Holy Spirit—and he answers it. God has spoken to him, and he longs to speak to God—either to set to his seal that God is true in matter of revelation, or to confess some sin of which the Spirit of God has convinced him, or to acknowledge some mercy which God's providence has given, or to express assent to some great truth which God the Holy Spirit has then opened to his understanding. Keep your hearts, my brothers and sisters, in such a state that when God speaks to you, you may be ready to answer in spite of whatever troubles may ruffle you, or whatever trials may disturb you. Jesus Christ had just had a time of weeping, and it was succeeded by a season of grateful communion! Like He, maintain a ready ear to listen to the voice of God, and at that time answer thankfully, and bless the Lord your God!

Now it seems to me, in looking through these two verses, that the Savior would teach us three things. When we have learned these three things, I shall endeavor to turn them to practical account. He will have us first of all *seek after an enlightened apprehension of the character of God as Father, and yet Lord of heaven and earth*. He would have us next observe carefully, *the manifest discrimination of His grace*—"You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes." He would have us, thirdly, *cultivate a spirit entirely in harmony with the divine will*, thanking Him that He has done all things according to His own purpose—"Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight."

I. First of all, then, THE SAVIOR WOULD HAVE US ATTAIN TO AN ENLIGHTENED APPREHENSION OF THE CHARACTER OF GOD.

What gross mistakes men make concerning the character of God! I believe it is a mistake about God Himself which has been the root and foundation of all the mistakes in theology. Our conviction is that Arminian theology, to a great extent, makes God to be less than He is. The professors of that system have come to receive its doctrines because they have not a clear understanding, either of the omnipotence, the immutability, or the sovereignty of God. They seem to always ask the question, "What ought God to do to man, who is His creature?" We hold that that is a question that is never to be put, for it infringes on the sovereignty of God who has absolute right to do just as He wills! They ask the question, "What will God do with His promises if man changes his habit or his life?" We consider that to be a question not to be asked. Whatever man does, God remains the same, and abides faithful though even we should not believe Him! They ask the question, "What will be done for men who resist God's grace, if in the struggle man's will should be triumphant over the mercy of God?" We never ask that question— we think it is blasphemous! We believe God to be omnipotent and when He comes to strive with the soul of man, none can stay His hand! He breaks the iron sinew, and dashes the adamantine heart to shivers and rules in the heart of man as surely as in the army of the skies. A right clear apprehension of the character of God, we believe, would put an end to the Arminian mistake! We think, too, that ultra-Calvinism, which goes vastly beyond what the authoritative teaching of Christ, or the enlightened ministry of Calvin could warrant, gets some of its support from a wrong view of God. To the ultra-Calvinist, His absolute sovereignty is delightfully conspicuous. He is awe-stricken with the great and glorious attributes of the Most High. His omnipotence appalls him, and His sovereignty astonishes him, and he at once submits as if by a stern necessity to the will of God. He, however, too much forgets that God is love. He

does not make prominent enough the benevolent character of the divine Being. He annuls to some extent the fact that while God is not amenable to anything external from Himself, yet His own attributes are so blessedly in harmony that His sovereignty never inflicted a punishment which was not just—nor did it ever bestow a mercy until justice had first been satisfied! To see the holiness, the love, the justice, the faithfulness, the immutability, the omnipotence, and the sovereignty of God—all shining like a bright corona of eternal, and ineffable light—has never been given perfectly to any human being! And inasmuch as we have not seen all these, and as we hope yet to see them, our faulty vision has been the ground of many mistakes. Hence has arisen many of the heresies which vex the Church of Christ!

Now, my brothers and sisters, I would have you this morning look at the way in which our Lord Jesus Christ regards God—“Father, Lord of heaven and earth.” If you and I cannot know the Almighty to perfection because of *His* greatness, and of *our* shallowness, nevertheless let us try to apprehend these two claims upon our adoration, in which we owe to God the reverence of children, and the homage of subjects. Father!—Oh, what a precious word is that! Here is authority. “If I am a Father, where is My honor?” If you are sons, where is your obedience? But, here is affection mingled with Authority, an Authority which does not provoke rebellion; an obedience demanded which is most cheerfully rendered— which would not be withheld even if it might. Father!—here is a kingly attribute so sweetly veiled in love that the king’s crown is forgotten in the king’s face, and His scepter becomes not a rod of iron, but a silver scepter of mercy—the scepter indeed seems to be forgotten in the tender hand of Him that wields it. Father!—here is honor and affectionateness. What is a father’s heart to his children? That which friendship cannot do, and

mere benevolence will not attempt to do, a father's heart and hand must do! They are his offspring, he must bless them. They are his children, they spring from his own loins— he must show himself strong in their defense. Oh, get that thought of God, that while you obey Him as Father, yet you love Him as Father! Do not go about the service of God as slaves about the taskmaster's toil, but run in the way of His commands because it is your Father's way! Yield yourselves up to be the instruments of righteousness, because righteousness is your Father's will, and His will is the will of His child. In a father, then, you will observe there is mingled authority with affection, and there is also mingled origination with relationship. The man is not father to everything he produces. He may make the vessel—he may spend much skill upon it as he turns it upon the wheel, but he is not its father. Even so God made the stars, but He is not their Father. He made the very angels, but I know not that He said unto them at any time, “You are My sons.”

It is true in the sense of origination; we are all His offspring, for He made us all. But oh, again we repeat the sweet word— Father! Father! There is *relationship* here as well as origination. We are like He that made us—we, His chosen, are the next of kin to the King of kings, His children; then heirs—heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ Jesus—a relationship which never can be dissolved! A child can never be anything but the son of his own father—a relationship which no sin can ever break and no pains can ever loosen. The father is a father still, though his child is dragged in the mire—although he spits in his very father's face. The relationship is not to be removed by any act, either of father or of son. So stands it with the people of God! They are not only His creatures, but *doubly* His creatures, for He has created them anew in Christ Jesus! They have a relationship, for they are partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust. They

are so near to Him that none can stand between the sons of God, and God their Father, save Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son who is the link of union between the two! Father! He who can lisp that word upon his knees has uttered more eloquence than Demosthenes or Cicero ever knew! Abba, Father! He who can say that has uttered better music than cherubim or seraphim can reach! Abba, Father! There is heaven in the depth of that word! Father! There is all I need; all I can ask; all my necessities can demand; all my wishes can contrive. I have all-in-all to all eternity when I can say, "Father." Oh, do not, I pray you, look upon God as a great King unless you can also regard Him as your Father! Do not dare to come into the intense brightness of His sovereignty, or it will be to you thick darkness unless you can call Him Father! While you stand amazed at Him, dare not to look at the sun till you have the eagle eye of the spirit of adoption, lest it blind you! Launch not upon the sea of sovereignty till you have Fatherhood at the helm—but then, your little vessel may go from the shallows to the great deeps, and the deeper the sea shall be, the farther shall you be from the rocks, and the higher shall you be lifted above the quicksand! You may go as far as you can in having Him to be Lord of heaven and earth, if you can first recognize Him as being Father to your soul!

Permit me here, however, to remark that many Christians are effeminate in their theology. They are weak in their faith, because while they can say, "Father," they do not know God as being Lord of heaven and earth. I take it that Jesus meant by this expression that the Father was by power and by *right*, Lord of heaven and earth. We all concede that He is Lord of heaven and earth by *power*. From the dazzling wings of the angel down to the painted wings of the fly—all flights of beings are controlled by Him. From the roar of earth's direst convulsions down to the gentle falling of a rain drop—all sounds that break

on mortal ears are modulated by Him! From the flash of lightning down to the glimmer of the glow-worm's lamp—there is no light or spark that His power does not kindle! He does as He wills. Fools see men doing—wise men discern God doing all! In the loftiest emperor we see Jehovah's tool, and nothing more. In the mightiest patriot we see but an instrument in the hands of God. In all that man has done, whether it is perverse or excellent, we have learned to look beyond the material agents! While we award to one man curses, and to another honor, yet we see God working all things after the counsels of His will. I am verily persuaded that the wildest fury of the storm is ordered in the eye of God. I am convinced that He has a bit in the mouth of the tempest to rein in the winds. And so it is when battle is let loose, and war rages abroad, and nations are broken as with a rod of iron—as though they were but potters' vessels—in every catastrophe and calamity there is the reigning God, stalking victoriously over the battlefield to whichever side triumph may turn! He walks among cabinets, and makes their folly serve His wisdom! He enters the heart of man, and makes its very stubbornness the pliant slave of His superior might! He rules everywhere by power.

There are some Christians who, not knowingly perhaps, but unwittingly, deny the fact that Jehovah is Lord of heaven and earth by *right*. Brothers and sisters, I pray you learn this. You have not the key of a solid theology till you know this. Great God you have has absolute right to do whatever He wills with His own creatures! And especially since man has fallen, does He have a right to utterly destroy him or to save him as seems good in His sight. No man has any right to anything from God! Whatever right he had as a creature, he forfeited when he sinned. Now God declares, and we must acknowledge it to be a declaration of unimpeachable right—"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy. I will have compassion on

whom I will have compassion.” “So, then, it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, so that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy which He had afore prepared unto glory?” Who shall find fault, or who shall dispute His will? I would that the Christian Church did not think so lightly of God’s sovereignty. I grant you it is an awesome doctrine. All great truths of God must produce awe upon little minds like ours! I grant you it is a doctrine which the boasted freedom of man’s thoughts will not readily receive. Be it so; it is the more true to me, for what is this freedom of men’s thoughts in modern times, but licentiousness? What is it but a sort of mental dissoluteness by which they say, “We will cast off the yoke of God; we will break His bands in sunder, and cast away His Words from us”? Oh, be wise! Kiss the Son for He is your King; bow down before your God—for dispute it as you may—He is your Lord! Yield to His sovereignty, for He will be sovereign even if you will not meekly yield! Confess that He has a right to do as He wills, for He will do as He wills whether you confess it or not! Do not seek to deny His right to reign, but rather say, “The Lord reigns; let the earth rejoice, let the multitudes of the isles be glad.” Where could power be better placed—who better could be trusted with all strength than the infinitely Wise, the boundlessly Good? Great God, it would be a calamity indeed if You had not an absolute right to do Your own will when that will is always good, and always right, and always kind, and always best for the sons of men!

II. Well now, brothers and sisters, if you have a clear and enlightened apprehension of God’s relationship as Father, and as sovereign Lord, I am not afraid to trust you with the study of doctrine; you will not go far wrong. But next, Christ would

have us carefully observe **THE DISCRIMINATING CHARACTER OF GOD'S GRACE**. "You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes."

Is it not, my dear friends, a notorious fact that the things of God are hidden from the wise and prudent? Cast your eyes around now upon the great men in the literature of today—how very few of them are willing to receive the things of God! And though in the past, we can number among reasoners such men as Locke and Bacon, and among poetic minds such men as Cowper and Milton—and though we can go back and find some men of wisdom, and some men of great mental caliber who have received the truth as it is in Jesus—yet still it is to be confessed that they make but a very small part of the great whole. They are but the exception which proves the rule. It is true of ancient and modern, the past and the present—"These things are hidden from the wise and prudent." See what the wise and prudent do. A large number of them will disdain to listen to the things of God. "Pooh," they say, "religion for the mob—it suits very well the poor, we dare say—but we are intelligent, we are instructed—we do not need to go and hear such mere simplicities and elementary teaching as that." So they turn upon their heels, and go and speak against the thing which they have never heard, or which, if they have heard, they have not understood! Then those who will hear—do you not perceive how they laugh? Where the poor simple-minded man walks right straight into heaven's gate—these men have raised objections to the manner in which the nails are put in the gate—or to certain stones that pave the way, and they cannot go in until they know the precise pattern of everything in the heavenly place! They raise objections where we should see none. While we take the provisions of truth and sit down, and feed at the table, they are objecting to the way in which the flesh is carved or the wine poured out! And then there are others of

them who not only raise objections, but set themselves willfully to oppose. Mark you this—I do not believe there is a single honest man living who, having heard the gospel simply preached—does not in his conscience believe it to be true! I am persuaded that the Light of God will penetrate! There is such force, such energy in Christ—the power of God, and the wisdom of God—it must and will pierce through some crevice, and convince at least a natural conscience. But, this is the very reason why men oppose it—they do not want it to be true! It would be unpleasant for them if it were true; they would be compelled to live more strictly than they do. They feel it would cut against their previous notions, and pull down their old prejudices. They love darkness. What they do not want to be true, they try to prove not to be true, and that is the easiest thing in the world! I could prove by syllogism any lie which I wanted to believe, and so could you. You can either bid the truth be quiet, because its shrill note awakens you out of a sleep which you love—or else you can set up a counter-noise which shall drown the unwelcome sound, so that you cannot hear the celestial voice. I know why men brag; we well understand why they speak loud words of blasphemy. As sure as ever a man is too bold, there is an unquiet conscience to prompt him! Do not set down the blasphemies of Voltaire to any real doubts; that man was as firm a believer as you and I, but he was not honest. Do not put down, I pray you, the blatant blasphemy of Tom Paine to a conviction that Christianity was not true—he knew it was true and he, perhaps, of all men was the grossest of liars to his own soul—for he fought against a truth which his own conscience acknowledged to be taught of God! Oh, let us see to it that while these wise and prudent men are discussing and disputing, and objecting and dividing—let us see to it that *we* do not imitate them, lest haply these things should be hidden from us, and not revealed to us though we are babes.

But while these wise and prudent ones are passed by, how graciously God has revealed His truth to babes, to men of simple minds! In the eyes of the wise, they might be credulous; in the judgment of the prudent, they might be superstitious; but they heard the gospel. It fitted their case; it was just the thing they needed. They were guilty—it offered them pardon! They were lost—it provided them a Savior! They were cast away—it found them a Shepherd who had come to seek and to save that which was lost! They took it—they laid hold of it. They found it gave them joy and comfort, peace and rest. They went on; they found their experience tallied with what they had learned. They examined more and more. They never found a flaw or discrepancy between the feelings within, and the teaching without. And they, though they were but babes, and could not argue; though they were but children, and could not discuss; though they were fools and did not pretend to be wise—they entered into the kingdom of God, and attained to the enjoyment of the peace which Jesus gives to them who trust Him!

Do you ask why is it God has not been pleased to call by His grace the wise and prudent? Albert Barnes says as a reason why the wise and prudent do not come, “Because they have peculiar mental temptations; because they think the gospel to be beneath their consideration; because it does not flatter their pride, and because again they are so occupied with their wisdom, that they have no time for the things of God.” Now these are very good reasons why they do not accept the gospel, but not the reason why God does not call them! God’s reason for calling or not calling a man is not in man, but in Himself! So we are told in the text—“Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.” Why, then, did He not ask them? You may ask Gabriel before the throne, but he cannot tell you! You may ask all the people of God everywhere—but they cannot tell you,

either—for the reason is that God willed it, and there we must let it rest! “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.” He could have converted emperors upon their thrones; He could have made the philosopher a preacher; He could, if He would, have subdued the loftiest mind to His service! If He chose the fishermen, and the unenlightened peasants of the Lake of Galilee, He did so because He would. There we must leave it—ask no account of His affairs— but, tremble and be still!

III. Yet when we come to our last point, which we shall now do, I think we shall see some reason why we can in our very hearts most truly acquiesce, and admire the wisdom and graciousness of the divine choice. I come, then, to this third point, **THE SAVIOR WOULD HAVE HIS PEOPLES’ HEARTS IN PERFECT AGREEMENT WITH THE WILL AND ACTION OF GOD.** “Father,” said Jesus, “I thank You that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes.”

Brothers and sisters, can you say, “I thank You, Father,” too? Many of you can for personal reasons, for you were babes. Ah, we were each of us but babes. He who stands before you, if he is chosen of God, as he trusts he is, certainly never belonged to the wise and prudent! When I have sometimes had it flung in my teeth—“This man was never educated at college! This man came into the ministry in literary attainments totally unprepared for it; he is only fit to address the poor—his ministry is not polite and polished—he has but little classical instruction; he cannot read forty languages,” I say to them, “Precisely so; every word of it is true, and a great deal more. I would not stop you if you would go on; if you will just show me more of my folly; if you will just point out to me yet more of my lack of prudence!” If the wise man would say, “This man takes a daring project in hand, and does not consult any man,

does not tell anybody about it, but goes and does it like a madman”—just so, precisely so! I will agree to the whole of it! But when I have said this, I will remind you, “God has chosen the base things of this world to confuse the mighty, and the things that are not, to bring to nothing, the things that are.” On this wise I will put it, in this thing I will become a fool in glorying—what have your college men done that is comparable to this work? What have the wisest and most instructed of modern ministers done in the conversion of souls compared with the work of this unlettered boy? It was *God’s* work, and *God* chose the most unfitting instrument so that He might have the more glory. And He *shall* have the glory—I will not take any of it myself by pretending to an education I have not received, or an attainment I do not possess, or an eloquence which I never coveted! I speak God’s Words, and God, I know, speaks through me, and works through me, and unto Him be the glory! I can join with many of you personally for thanking Him, that He has “revealed these things to babes, which have been hidden from the wise and prudent.”

But don’t you understand, my brothers and sisters that if the Lord in His sovereignty had taken another course, it would still have been our duty to be thankful? Ah, you who boast your pedigrees! He has dashed them! You who flaunt your golden eagles—you lack the splendor of His smile! You who are clothed in purple, and you who fare sumptuously every day—what cares He for your greatness? Let the crowd stand and gape at you; let the fool bow down in admiration, but the King of kings, the Lord of lords, regards you no more then menials that serve His will, but are not of His council, and know not His secret. He has put a stain upon proud distinctions! See, too, how He spits upon the boastfulness of human learning! And you who have the key of heaven, and will not enter yourselves, neither suffer the poor and ignorant to enter— how He has

laughed at your pretensions! “The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat, and they say, ‘We are the men, and wisdom will die with us.’” They come forth flaunting their degrees, and boasting their high and lofty credentials, but, He casts dust into your faces, and leaves you all to your blind confusion! Then, stooping down from His mightiness, He takes up the babe. Though it is a learned babe, if it is a babe, He takes it. I mean, though it has riches, though it has skill, though it has credentials, He does not cast it away from Him for that reason, but, He does not choose it for that reason, either! He takes it, it is a babe. It is willing to be nothing; it is willing to be a fool. The prince may be as willing to be saved as the pauper is. The great man may be willing to stoop, and to lie at the feet of Jesus as though he were nobody. He takes these, these are the men who God has chosen—humble and contrite—they who tremble at His Word. Oh, because He has thus stained the pride of all glory, let His people rejoice! Let all His saints be glad!

I wish, my dear friends, that those who are so afraid of the doctrine of election would remember that it is the only lasting source of joy to a Christian. You say, “How is that? Surely we ought to rejoice most in our usefulness.” No, note the 12 apostles went out to preach, and they were so successful that Christ said, “I saw Satan as light fall from heaven,” but He said to them, “Nevertheless, rejoice not in this, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.” Our election is a perennial spring! When other streams are dry, the fact that our names are written in heaven shall still yield us comfort. And you will remark, as I have before observed, Christ had just been exceedingly sorrowful because Capernaum and Bethsaida had rejected His Word, but He finds comfort and begins to thank His God because there was a remnant, after all, according to the election of grace. People of God! Do not stand afraid of this precious truth, but love it, feed upon it, rejoice in it, and it

shall be as oil to your bones; it shall supply them with marrow and give strength to your very being!

IV. Having thus explained the text as best I could, I want your earnest attention while I try to make some practical use of it.

A word to those Christians, who are downcast, trodden, afflicted. You have lost a friend; you have had losses in your business; you have been tried in body; you have been afflicted by the slanders of your enemies. Very well, but you have still something to rejoice about! Come, dry those eyes; take that harp from the willow. Come now, sit no longer on the dunghill; take off that sackcloth, remove those ashes; take the oil of joy, and put on the garment of praise, and say this morning, "Father, I thank You, that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes." At least you have this to thank God for—although you were a simpleton, a very fool in your own estimation—yet you have received the truth as it is in Jesus, and you have been saved thereby! Let all the chosen seed be glad, and take heart, and rejoice in God!

The next piece of practical instruction is this—that we learn, my brothers and sisters, the wicked folly of those professed Christians who despise the poor. There is growing up, even in our Dissenting Churches, an evil which I greatly deplore—a despising of the poor! I frequently hear in conversation such remarks as this, "Oh, it is no use trying in such a place as this, you could never raise a selfsupporting cause; there are none but poor living in the neighborhood." If there is a site to be chosen for a chapel, it is said, "Well, there is such a lot of poor people round about, you would never be able to keep a minister. It is no use trying; they are all poor." You know that in the City of London itself, there is now scarcely a Dissenting place of worship! The reason for giving most of them up, and moving them into the suburbs is that all the

respectable people live out of town, and of course, they are the people to look after! They will not stop in London—they will go out and take villas—and live in the suburbs! And therefore, the best thing is to take the endowment which belonged to the old chapel, and go and build a new chapel somewhere in the suburbs where it may be maintained. “No doubt,” it is said, “the poor ought to be looked after, but we had better leave them to another order, an inferior order—the City Missionaries will do for them—send them a few street preachers.” And as to the idea of raising a cause where they are *all* poor people, why there is hardly a minister that would attempt it! Now my experience of poor people convinces me that all this talk is folly! If there are any people who love the cause of God better than others, I believe it is the poor—when the grace of God takes real possession of their heart. In this place, for instance, I believe we have but very few who could be put down among the rich. There have been some who have cast in their lot among us just now, but still, the masses who did the work of building this house, and who have stood side by side with me in the battle of the last seven years must be reckoned among the poor of this world! They have been a peaceable people, a happy people, a working people, a plain people, and I say, “God bless the poor!” I would fear no difficulties whatever in commencing a cause of Christ, even though the masses were poor. I am persuaded that the rich, who are truly the people of God, love to come and assist where there are poor. If you were to cast out the poor, you would cast out the Church’s strength—you would give up that which is, after all, the backbone of the Church of Christ! I think we have been doing wrong in neglecting the City of London itself. It is true, I do not believe some ministers could get congregations in London—it is a pity they have them anywhere—men who cannot call a spade a spade, or a loaf of bread, a loaf of bread!

They are so refined, and speak such fine and polished language, that you would think they were not natives of England, and had never heard the people speak their own homely brogue. May the Lord raise up among us men who speak market language, who have sympathy with the people, and who speak the people's tongue, and we shall prove that it is an infamous lie, that the causes cannot be maintained in poor neighborhoods! They can be and they *shall* be. Why, brothers and sisters are we to say that we will give up the poor merely to the missionary? We complain that the artisan will not come to hear; that the coarse jacket will not listen. It is not true! The coarse jacket is as ready to listen as is the broadcloth, if he has something to listen to! If it is the gospel, they who walk are as ready to come as they who ride, if they could but understand! I think that those who are gifted with this world's goods, or with this world's wisdom, will do right well if instead of looking out for respectable positions, they will look out for the poorest positions, for there they will find the most of those whom God has chosen—the poor in this world, rich in faith, heirs of the kingdom!

I would not say a word to set class against class; for I suppose that the soul of a rich man is of no less worth than the soul of the poorest; all stand alike in the sight of God! But, I do enter my solemn protest against men who say that the religion of Christ is not fit for the poor neighborhoods, and only meant for our respectable suburbs. It is not true, brothers and sisters! It is a great and gross heresy against the goodness of God, and against the adaptation of the gospel of Christ to the needs of the poor! They *can* sustain Churches! Look at the ragged churches in Glasgow and Edinburgh. They call them ragged, but you see as clean faces, and as intellectual countenances there, as you would anywhere! If they find a man who can preach, who they can hear, they will maintain and

support him! The gospel of Christ will find as ready and faithful adherents among the poorest of the poor, as amongst the richest of the rich, and far more so in proportion.

Another homily, which you will think rather strange, is this—how wrong the Church of Christ is when it neglects the rich. “Well,” you say, “that is not in the text! It says these things were hidden from the wise and prudent.” Yes, I know they were, but Christ thanked God they were. “I thank You,” He said, “that You have hid these things.” What then? If I preach to the rich, to the wise, to the prudent, and they reject it, have I lost my toil? No, no—there is cause for thankfulness even then! We are to preach the gospel to *every creature without any distinction whatever*—high or low—great or small. “Well, but the wise and prudent will not hear it.” We know. But if they reject it, still there is matter for thankfulness that they *heard* it. “Why?” you ask. Why because we are unto God a sweet smelling savor both in them who are saved, and in them who perish. To the one we are a savor of life unto life, and to the other a savor of death unto death, but to God, still, a sweet smelling savor! What? Is God glorified in the damnation of the wise and prudent? Yes, tremendous fact! At the winding up of this world’s drama, God will be glorified in the men who shut their eyes against His grace, as well as in the men whose eyes are opened to receive it! The yells of hell shall be but the deep bass of the everlasting music of which the songs in heaven are the *air*. God, the terrible one, shall have praise from the wise and prudent when their folly shall be discovered; when their wisdom shall be dashed in pieces or torn to shreds. God, the terrible avenger of His own gospel, shall be glorified when those are cast out, who having heard the gospel, were too wise to believe it, and having listened to it, were too prudent to give their praise to it. In either case God is glorified, and in either case Christ gives thanks, and devoutly gives thanks! To the rich,

then, as well as to the poor; to the hopeless case as well as to the hopeful; to the wise as well as to the babe, we should preach Christ—because even if they are not saved, still, God is glorified! He got honor even upon Pharaoh, His enemy, when he perished in the midst of the sea!

And now, last of all, you who are babes, you who perhaps, “know and know no more than the Bible true,” you who never read a word of Greek or Latin, and sometimes cannot spell the hard words of English— you say, “I do not go to a place of worship, I am so ignorant.” Do you not perceive your own wickedness in staying away? God has revealed these things unto babes, and if there are any men or women who ought to come, certainly it is you! When the poor man says, “Oh, a place of worship is not for me,” he is without excuse, because the Scripture expressly says, “God has chosen the base things, and the things that are not, to bring to nothing the things that are.” I invite any man and every man to listen to the gospel, and if you do not come, you certainly do despise a very precious promise! You think the gospel is not meant for hard-working men, but it is meant for *you*—for you above all others! You say, “Christ is a gentleman’s Christ.” No, He is the *people’s* Christ! “I have exalted one chosen out of the people.” Do you think our religion is meant for the learned? Not so—it is meant for the most foolish, and most ignorant! We rejoice to know that the poor have the gospel preached to them. But if they will not come and hear it, their guilt shall be sevenfold—seeing there were special words of comfort for them, there were choice sentences of invitation for them. If they do not come and listen, they must perish miserably, without the pretense of a shadow of a dream of an excuse! Ah, you who are so poor that you scarcely know where to lay your heads; you who are so ignorant, that a ragged school might perhaps be your best academy, “Come you, come buy wine and milk, without money and

without price.” Come you as you are to the great teacher of your souls! Trust Him as you are! Trust His precious blood, His glorious cross, His intercession before the Eternal throne—and you shall have reason to say in the words of the Master, “Father, I thank You that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.”

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A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Morning, June 2nd, 1861,
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REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“This is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD
OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” — Jeremiah 23:6

MAN BY THE FALL sustained an infinite loss in the matter of righteousness. He suffered the loss of a righteous nature, and then a two-fold loss of legal righteousness in the sight of God. Man sinned; he was therefore no longer innocent of transgression. Man did not keep the command; he therefore was guilty of the sin of omission. In that which he *committed*, and in that which he *omitted*, his original character for uprightness was completely wrecked! Jesus Christ came to undo the mischief of the fall for His people. So far as their sin concerned their breach of the command, that He has removed by His precious blood. His agony and bloody sweat have forever taken away the consequences of sin from believers, seeing Christ did by His one sacrifice bear the penalty of that sin in His flesh. He, His own self, bore our sins in His own body on the cross. Still, it is not enough for a man to be pardoned. He, of course, is then in the eyes of God, without sin, but it was required of man that he should actually *keep* the command. It was not enough that he did not break it or that he is regarded through the blood as though he did not break it. He

must keep it, he must continue in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them! How is this necessity supplied? Man must have righteousness, or God cannot accept him. Man must have a perfect obedience, or else God cannot reward him. Should He give heaven to a soul that has not perfectly kept the law? That were to give the reward where the service is not done, and that before God would be an act which might impeach His justice. Where, then, is the righteousness with which the pardoned man shall be completely covered, so that God can regard him as having kept the law, and reward him for so doing?

Surely, my brothers and sisters, none of you are so drunk as to think that this righteousness can be worked out by yourselves! You must despair of ever being able to keep the law perfectly. Each day you sin. Since you have passed from death unto life, the old Adam still struggles for dominion within you. And by the force of the lusts of the flesh, you are brought into captivity to the law of sin which is in your members! The good you would do, you do not—and the evil you would not, that you too often do! Some have thought the works of the Holy Spirit in us would give us a righteousness in which we might stand. I am sure, my brothers and sisters we would not say a word derogatory to the work of the Holy Spirit. It is divine! But we hold it to be a great cardinal point in divinity that the work of the Spirit never meant to supplant the merits of the Son. We could not depreciate the Lord Jesus Christ in order to exalt the office of the Holy Spirit of God! We know that each particular branch of the divine salvation which was espoused by the persons of the Trinity has been carried out by each One to perfection. Now, as we are accepted in the Beloved, it must be by a something that the Beloved did! As we are justified in Christ, it must be by a something not that the Spirit has done, but which Christ has done. We must believe, then—for there is no other alternative—that the righteousness in which we

must be clothed, and through which we must be accepted, and by which we are made meet to inherit eternal life, can be no other than the work of Jesus Christ! We, therefore, assert—believing that Scripture fully warrants us—that the life of Christ constitutes the righteousness in which His people are to be clothed. His death washed away their sins, His life covered them from head to foot; His death was the sacrifice to God, His life was the gift to man, by which man satisfies the demands of the law. Herein the law is honored, and the soul is accepted!

I find that many young Christians, who are very clear about being saved by the merits of Christ's death, do not seem to understand the merits of His life. Remember, young believers, that from the first moment when Christ did lie in the cradle, until the time when He ascended up on high, He was at work for His people; and from the moment when He was seen in Mary's arms, till the instant when in the arms of death He "bowed His head and gave up the ghost," He was at work for your salvation and mine! He completed the work of obedience in His life, and said to His Father, "I have finished the work which You gave Me to do." Then He completed the work of atonement in His death, and knowing that all things were accomplished, He cried, "It is finished!" He was through His life spinning the web for making the royal garment, and in His death, He dipped that garment in His blood. In His life, He was gathering together the precious gold. In His death, He hammered it out to make for us a garment which is of worked gold! You have as much to thank Christ for living as for dying, and you should be as reverently and devoutly grateful for His spotless life as for His terrible and fearful death. The text speaking of Christ, the son of David, the branch out of the root of Jesse, styles Him **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**. Having introduced the doctrine of imputed righteousness, I proceed to map out my subject. First, by way of *affirmation*; we

say of the text—it is so—Christ is THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. Secondly, I shall exhort you to do Him *homage*; let us call Him so—for this is the name whereby He shall be called. And thirdly, I shall appeal to your *gratitude*; let us wonder at the reigning grace which has caused us to fulfill the promise, for we have been sweetly compelled to call Him THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

First, then, *He is so*. Jesus Christ is THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. There are but three words, “JEHOVAH”—for so it is in the original—“OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” He is Jehovah. Read that verse, and you will clearly perceive that the Messiah of the Jews, Jesus of Nazareth, the Savior of the Gentiles, is certainly Jehovah. He has the incommunicable title of the Most High God! “Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely—and this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” Oh, you Arians and Socinians who monstrously deny the Lord who bought you, and put Him to open shame by denying His divinity—read that verse and let your blasphemous tongues be silent—and let your stubborn hearts melt in penitence, because you have so foully sinned against Him! He *is* Jehovah, or, mark you, the whole of God’s Word is false, and there is no ground whatever for a sinner’s hope! We know, and this day we testify in His name, that the very Christ who did lie in the manger as an infant was infinite even then; that He who cried, cried for very pain as a child, was nevertheless saluted at that very moment as God by the songs of the creatures that His hands had made! He who walked in pain over the flinty acres of Palestine, was at the same time possessor of heaven and earth; He who had not where to lay

His head, and was despised and rejected of men, was at the same instant God over all, blessed forever more. He who sweat great drops of blood did bear the earth upon His shoulders. He who was flagellated in Pilate's hall was adored by spirits of the just made perfect. He who did hang upon the tree had the creation hanging upon Him. He who died on the cross was the ever-living, the everlasting one. As a man He died, as God He lives! As Mary's son, He bled, as the Son of the Eternal God, He had the sway and the dominion over all the world! In nature, Christ proves Himself to be universal God. Without Him was not anything made that was made; by Him all things consist. Who less than God could make the heavens and the earth? Bow before Him! Bow before Him, for He made you, and should not the creatures acknowledge their Creator?

Providence attests His Godhead. He upholds all things by the word of His power. Creatures that are animate have their breath from His nostrils; inanimate creatures that are strong and mighty stand only by His strength. He can say concerning the earth, "I bear the pillars thereof." In the deep foundations of the sea, His power is felt, and in the towering arches of the starry heavens, His might is recognized to the fullest! And as for grace, we claim for Christ that He is Jehovah in the great kingdom of His grace! Who less than God could have carried your sins and mine, and cast them all away? Who less than God could have interposed to deliver us from the jaws of hell's lions, and bring us up from the pit, having found a ransom? On whom less than God could we rely to keep us from the innumerable temptations that beset us? How can He be less than God when He says, "Lo, I am with you always, unto the end of the world"? How could He be omnipresent if He were not God? How could He hear our prayers—the prayers of millions scattered through the leagues of earth, and attend to them all, and give acceptance to all—if He were not infinite in

understanding, and infinite in merit? How was this if He were less than God? Let Atheists scoff, let Deists sneer, let the vain Socinian boast, let the Arian lift up his puny voice—but we will glory in this fact—that He who bought us with His blood is Jehovah—very God of very God! At His footstool we bow and pay Him the very homage that we pay to His Father and to the Spirit—

“Blessings more than we can give,
Be Lord, forever Yours.”

But the text speaks about righteousness, too—“Jehovah our righteousness.” And He is so. Christ in His life was so righteous that we may say of the life, taken as a whole, that it is righteousness itself! Christ is the law incarnate. Understand me, He lived out the law of God to the very fullest, and while you see God’s precepts written in fire on Sinai’s brow, you see them written in flesh in the person of Christ—

“My dear Redeemer, and my Lord,
I read my duty in Your word,
But in Your life the law appears
Drawn out in living characters!”

He never offended against the commands of the Just One. From His eyes there never flashed the fire of unhallowed anger. On His lips there did never hang the unjust or licentious word. His heart was never stirred by the breath of sin, or the taint of iniquity. In the secret of His heart, no fault was hidden. In His understanding was no defect; In His judgment no error. In His miracles there was no ostentation. In Him there was indeed no guile. His powers, being ruled by His understanding, all of them acted and co-acted to perfection’s very self, so that never was

there any flaw of omission or stain of commission. The law consists in this first, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart.” He did so. It was His meat and His drink to do the will of Him who sent Him. Never man spent Himself as He did. Hunger and thirst, and nakedness were nothing to Him, nor death itself, if He might so be baptized with the baptism wherewith He must be baptized, and drink the cup which His Father had set before Him! The law consists also in this, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” In all He did, and in all He suffered, He more than fulfilled the precept, for “He saved others, Himself He could not save.” He exhausted the utmost resources of love in the deep devotion and self-sacrifice of loving! He loved man better than His own life. He would sooner be spit upon than that man should be cast into the flames of hell, and sooner yield up the ghost in agonies that cannot be described than that the souls His Father gave Him should be cast away!

He carried out the law, then, I say to the very letter; He spelled out its mystic syllables, and verily, He magnified it and made it honorable. He loved the Lord His God, with all His heart, and soul, and mind, and He loved His neighbors as Himself. Jesus Christ was righteousness personified! “Which of you convicts Me of sin,” He might well say. One thousand eight hundred years have passed since then, and blasphemy itself has not been able to charge Him with a fault! Strange as it may appear, the most perverted judges have nevertheless acknowledged the awful dignity of His character. They have railed at His miracles; they have denied His Godhead; but His righteous character, I know not that they have dared to impugn! They have hatched jokes about His generation; they have made His poverty a jest, and His death has been the theme of ribald song; but His life has staggered even the most unbelieving, and made the careless wonder how such a character could have

been conceived, even if it is a fiction, and much more, how it could have been executed if it is a fact. No one who I know of has dared to charge Christ with unrighteousness to man, or with a want of devotedness to God. See then, it is so! We do not stay to prove His righteousness any more than we did to prove His Godhead. The day is coming when men shall acknowledge Him to be Jehovah, and when looking upon all His life while He was incarnate here, they shall be compelled to say that His life was righteousness itself! However the essence of the title lies in the little word, “our”—“Jehovah *our* righteousness.” This is the grappling iron with which we get a hold on Him—this is the anchor which dives into the bottom of this great deep of His immaculate righteousness. This is the sacred rivet by which our souls are joined to Him. This is the blessed hand with which our soul touches Him, and He becomes to us, all-in-all, “Jehovah *our* righteousness.”

You will now observe that there is a most precious *doctrine* unfolded in this title of our Lord and Savior. I think we may take it thus—when we believe in Christ by faith, we receive our Justification. As the merit of His blood takes away our sin, so the merit of His obedience is imputed to us for righteousness. We are considered, as soon as we believe, as though the works of Christ were *our* works. God looks upon us as though that perfect obedience, of which I have just now spoken, had been performed by ourselves—as though our hands had been busy at the loom, as though the fabric and the stuff which have been worked up into the fine linen which is the righteousness of the saints, had been grown in our own fields! God considers us as though we were Christ—looks upon us as though His *life* had been our *life*—and accepts, blesses, and rewards us as though all that He did had been done by us, His believing people. Accordingly, if you will turn to the 33rd chapter of this same prophet Jeremiah, and look at the 16th verse, you will see it

written, “This is the name wherewith *she* shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” I know that Socinus in his day used to call this an atrocious, detestable, and licentious doctrine—probably it was because he was an atrocious, detestable, and licentious man! Many men use their own names when they are applying names to other persons. They are so well-acquainted with their own characters, and so suspicious of them, that they think it best, before another can express the suspicion, to attach the very same accusation to someone else! Now we hold, you know, that this doctrine is not atrocious, but most delightful; that it is not abominable, but Godlike; that it is not licentious, but holy—and let others say what they will of it—we will repeat the praise which we have been singing—

“Jesus, Your perfect righteousness
My beauty is, my glorious dress;”

and we will wait for the day when all things shall be tried by fire, for we feel confident that—

“Bold shall we stand in that great day,
For who anything to our charge shall lay,”

when we are clothed with the divine righteousness!

Imputation, so far from being an exceptional case with regard to the righteousness of Christ, lies at the very bottom of the entire teaching of Scripture! How did we fall, my brethren? We fell by the imputation of Adam’s sin to us. Adam was our federal head; he represented us; and when he sinned, we sinned representatively in him, and what he did was imputed to us! You say that you never agreed to the imputation. No, but I would not have you say thus—for as by representation we fell—it is by the *representative system* that we rise! The angels fell

personally and individually—and they never rise; but we fell in another, and we have, therefore, the power given by divine grace to rise in another. The root of the fall is found in the federal relationship of Adam to his seed—thus, we fell by imputation. Is it any wonder that we should rise by imputation? Deny this doctrine and I ask you—how are men pardoned at all? Are they not pardoned because satisfaction has been offered for sin by Christ? Very well, then, but that satisfaction must be *imputed* to them or else how is God just in giving to them the results of the death of another—unless that death of the other is first of all imputed to them? When we say that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to all believing souls, we do not hold forth an exceptional theory, but we expound a grand truth of God which is so consistent with the theory of the fall, and the plan of pardon, that it must be maintained in order to make the gospel clear! I think it was this doctrine which Martin Luther called the article of standing or falling of the Church. I find a passage in his works which seems to me to refer to this doctrine rather than to justification by faith. He ought certainly to have said, “Justification by faith is *the* doctrine of standing or falling of the Church.” But in Luther’s mind, imputed righteousness was so interwoven with justification by faith, that he could not see any distinction between the two! And I must confess, in trying to observe a difference, I do not see much. I must give up justification by faith if I give up imputed righteousness. True justification by faith is the surface soil—but then, imputed righteousness is the granite rock which lies underneath it; and if you dig down through the great truth of a sinner’s being justified by faith in Christ, you must, as I believe, inevitably come to the doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ as the basis and foundation on which that simple doctrine rests.

And now let us stop a moment and think over this whole title—“THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” Brethren, the Law-Giver has Himself obeyed the law! Do you not think that His obedience will be sufficient? Jehovah has Himself become man so He may do man’s work—do you think that He has done it imperfectly? Jehovah—He who girds the angels that excel in strength—has taken upon Him the form of a servant that He may become obedient—do you think that His service will be incomplete? Let the fact that the Savior is Jehovah strengthen your confidence! Be bold. Be very courageous. Face heaven and earth, and hell with the challenge of the apostle, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” Look back upon your past sins—look upon your present infirmities—and all your future errors, and while you weep the tears of repentance, let no fear of damnation blanch your cheek! You stand before God today robed in your Savior’s garments, “with His spotless vestments on, holy as the Holy One.” Not Adam, when he walked in Eden’s bowers, was more accepted than you are—not more pleasing to the eyes of the all-judging, the sin-hating God, than you are if clothed in Jesus’ righteousness and sprinkled with His blood! You have a better righteousness than Adam had. He had a human righteousness. Your garments are divine! He had a complete robe, it is true, but the earth had woven it. You have a garment as complete, but *heaven* has made it for you to wear! Go up and down in the strength of this great truth of God, and boast exceedingly, and glory in your God! And let this be on the top and summit of your heart and soul—“Jehovah, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

You will remember that in Scripture Christ’s righteousness is compared to fair white linen; then I am, if I wear it, without spot! It is compared to worked gold; then I am, if I wear it, dignified and beautiful, and worthy to sit at the wedding feast

of the King of kings! It is compared, in the Parable of the prodigal son, to the best robe; then I wear a better robe than angels have, for they have not the best! But I, poor prodigal, once clothed in rags, companion to the nobility of the sty—I, fresh from the husks that swine do eat, am, nevertheless, clothed in the best robe, and am so accepted in the Beloved!

Moreover, it is also *everlasting* righteousness. Oh, this is, perhaps, the fairest point of it—that the robe shall never be worn out! No thread of it shall ever give way; it shall never hang in tatters upon the sinner's back. He shall live, and even though it were a Methuselah's life, the robe shall be as if it were woven yesterday! He shall pass through the stream of death, and the black stream shall not foul it; he shall climb the hills of heaven, and the angels shall wonder what this whiteness is which the sinner wears, and think that some new star is coming up from earth to heaven! He shall wear it among principalities and powers, and find himself not a whit inferior to them all! Cherubic garments, and seraphic mantles shall not be so lordly, so priestly, so divine as this robe of righteousness—this everlasting perfection which Christ has worked out—and brought in and given to all His people! Glory unto You, O Jesus, glory unto You! Unto You be hallelujahs! Forever, Hallelu—Jah! You are Jah—"Jehovah, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

II. Having thus expounded and vindicated this title of our Savior, I would now **APPEAL TO YOUR FAITH.**

Let us call Him so. "This is the name whereby He shall be *called*, "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." Let us call Him by this great name which the mouth of the Lord of Hosts has named! Let *us* call Him—poor sinners—even *we*, who are today smitten down with grief on account of sin! I want this text to be fulfilled in your ears and in your case today. You are guilty. Your own conscience acknowledges that the law

condemns you, and you dread the penalty. He who trusts Christ Jesus is saved, and he who believes on Him is not condemned! To every trustful spirit Christ is “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” Call Him so, I pray you! “I have no good thing of my own,” you say? Here is every good thing in Him! “I have broken the law,” you say? There is His blood for you! Believe in Him, He will wash you! “But then I have not kept the law.” There is His keeping of the law for you! Take it, sinner, take it! Believe on Him. “Oh, but I dare not,” says one. Do Him the honor to dare it! “Oh, but it seems impossible.” Honor Him by believing the impossibility! “Oh, but how can He save such a wretch as I am?” Soul! Christ is glorified in saving wretches! As I told you the other day, Christ cures incurable sinners—so I say now, He accepts unacceptable sinners! He receives sinners who think they are not fit to be received! Only trust Him and say, “He shall be *my* righteousness today.” “But suppose I should do it, and be presumptuous?” It is impossible! He bids you, He *commands* you! Let that be your warrant. “This is the commandment that you believe on Jesus Christ whom He has sent.” If you cannot say it with a loud voice, yet with the trembling silence of your soul, let heaven hear it—yes, Jesus, “All unholy and unclean, I am nothing else but sin, yet I dare with fervent venture of these quivering lips to call You, and to call upon You *now*, as the LORD MY RIGHTEOUSNESS!”

And you who have passed from a state of trembling hope into that of lively faith, I beseech you, call Him so. Let your faith say, as you see Him suffering, bleeding, dying, “Thus my sins were washed away.” But let not your faith stop there! As you see Him sweating, toiling, living a self-denying laborious life, say, “Thus the law was kept for me.” Come up to the foot of Sinai now, and if you see its lightnings flash, and hear its thunders roar, be brave and say like Moses, “I will ascend above

those thunders; I will stand enwrapped within the storm cloud, and I will talk with God. I have no cause for fear; there are no thunderbolts for me; for me no lightning flash can spend its arrow; I am perfectly, completely justified in the sight of God, through the righteousness of Jesus Christ.” Say that, child of God! Does yesterday’s sin make you stammer? In the teeth of all your sins, believe that He is still your righteousness. Your good works do not improve His righteousness. Your bad works do not sully it. This is a robe which your best deeds cannot mend, and your worst deeds cannot mar. You stand in Him, not in yourself! Whatever, then, your doubts and fears may have been, do now, poor troubled, distressed, distracted believer, say again, “Yes, He is THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

And some of us can say it yet better than that—for we can say it not merely by faith, but by fruition. We remember well the day when we first called Him “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” Oh, the peace it brought, the joy, the gladness, the transport! Since then we have proved it to be true, for we have had privileges we could not have had if He had not been our righteousness. We have had the privilege of reconciliation with God; and He could not be reconciled to one that had not a perfect righteousness; we have had access with boldness to God Himself, and He would never have allowed us to have access if we had not worn our brother’s garments. We have had adoption into the family, and the Spirit of adoption and God could not have adopted into His family any but righteous ones. How could the righteous Father be God of an unrighteous family? Our prayers have been heard, and we have had gracious answers, and that could not have been—for He could not hear the prayer of the wicked! He could not have heard us—if it had not been that He seemed to hear Christ crying through us, and to have seen Christ’s merits in us! And

therefore, He granted the desire of our hearts. We have had in daily rich and sweet experience such manifestations of fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, that to us it is a matter of fact as well as a matter of faith—a matter of praise as well as a matter of profession—that Jesus Christ is “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

Brothers and sisters, your divinity must be experimental, or it will not profit you. I would not give a straw for your theology if you learned it merely out of a college or out of a system of man’s teaching. No, no, we must prove these things to be true in our lives! I can say it and I must say it—the testimony is not egotistical—I *know* there is a comfort in the faith of Christ’s imputed righteousness which no other doctrine can yield. There is something that a man can sleep on and wake on, can live on and die on, in the firm conviction that he is received by God as though the deeds of Christ were his deeds—and the righteousness of Christ his righteousness. Take away his filthy garments from him; set a fair miter on his head; array him in fine linen. “O, Joshua, priest of the Most High, greatly beloved, come forth now in your garments, and offer acceptable sacrifice, seeing you wear the garments of Jesus, our great High Priest.” Let *us*, then, call upon His name, and extol Him in our worship as “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

And now, let the whole universal Church of Christ, in one glad song; call Jesus Christ the Lord their righteousness. Wake up, you isles of the sea; shout, you wilderness that Kedar does inhabit; you people of God, scattered and peeled, banished among the heathen, vexed with the filthy conversation of the idolaters—from your huts, from the destitute places that you inhabit, sing—“THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS!” Let no heir of heaven be silent at this hour; let every soul be stirred; though tempest-tossed and half a wreck, yet, mariner in Christ, say, “You are The Lord My righteousness.” Though cast down

into the deep dungeon, you despairing soul, yet say, “The Lord My righteousness.” Let no one of the entire believing family keep back his song, but together let us sing, “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” You spirits who walk in white; you glorious ones who, “day without night circle His throne rejoicing”; you saints that before this day beheld Him and died, not having received the promise, but having beheld it afar off—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Samuel, David, Solomon, and all the mighty host, sing you, sing you, sing you unto Him today—and let this be the summit of your song—“THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” Our spirit bows before Him now. Sweet fellowship beyond the stream! We clasp our hands with those who went before; and while the cherubim can only say, “Holy, holy, holy, He is righteous,” we lift up a higher note, and say, “Yes, thrice holy, but THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS is He.” Let none, then, of all His saints in heaven, and in earth, refuse to call Him, “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

III. I now conclude, in the third place, by appealing to your **GRATITUDE**. Let us admire that wonderful and reigning grace which has led you and me to call Him “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

When I look back some 10 or 12 years upon a foolish boy, who cared little for the things of God, who was burdened with an awful sense of sin, and thought that he never could be pardoned—a lad so often driven to the borders of despair, that he was willing to make away with his own life because he thought there was no happiness on earth for him—I can only say for myself, “O the riches of the grace of God in Christ, that ever I should stand not only conscious that He is the Lord my righteousness, but to preach Him to you!” O God, you have done wonderful things! You said by the mouth of Jeremy, “This is the name whereby He shall be called.” I call Him so

this day from my inmost soul! Jesus of Nazareth! Suffering man! Glorious God! You are the Lord my righteousness! If I were to pass this question around these galleries, and down below, oh, what hundreds of responses would there be from such as joyously obey the summons of gratitude! And among those about to be added to the Church (I am sure they would permit me to tell, for the honor of the glorious grace of God), there are very many who are special instances of that grace which has sweetly compelled them to call Christ their righteousness. Some of them, according to their own confession before us at the Church meeting, were not only reveling in drunkenness, one until he had well near drank away his reason by 30 years of habitual intoxication; but others of them were unclean, and unchaste till they had rioted in debauchery, and gone to the utmost lengths of crime! There are many in this place today who would not, though they would blush for the past, refuse to tell to the honor of redeeming grace, that once they had committed every crime in the catalog except murder! And if they have not committed that, it was nothing but the sovereign grace of God that restrained them! Some members of this Church have sinned in every part of the world—have sinned in every quarter of the globe—have committed every form of lust and vice—and if you had asked them 10 years ago whether they would ever be in a place of worship, they would have repelled with an oath what they would have thought an insult, and would have cursed you for supposing that *they* should so degrade themselves as to profess the faith of Christ! Brothers and sisters, I should not be surprised if you were to stand up now, and say, “Yes, still Jehovah Jesus is THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” Oh!—

“Wonders of grace to God belong!
Repeat His mercies in Your song!”

Who would have thought that the lips of the blasphemer should fulfill that very prophecy—that the tongue that could scarcely move without an oath should, nevertheless, glorify Christ—that the heart that was black with accumulated lust—the mouth which must have become a very sepulcher, breathing forth deadly fire, has now become a place for song, and the heart a house for music, while heart and tongue say, “Yes, He is THE LORD MY RIGHTEOUSNESS this very day!”

It would be a wonder if God should vow that the devils should yet sing His praise; but I do not think it would be a greater wonder than when He makes some of us sing His glorious praise! Brothers and sisters, you and I know that there is nothing in free-will doctrine; for in our case, at any rate, it was not true! Left to ourselves, where would we have been? What could Arminianism have done for us? Oh, no, it was *irresistible* grace that brought us to call Him “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” It was that divine *shall*, that broke in pieces our *will*. It was that strong arm that broke the iron sinew of our proud neck, and made us bow, even us, who would not have this man to reign over us! It was His finger that opened the blind eyes; for once we could see no beauty in Him. It was His breath that thawed our icy heart. Yes, once we felt no love to Him—

“But now, subdued by sovereign grace,
Our spirit longs for His embrace!
Our beauty this our glorious dress,
Jesus the Lord our righteousness.”

And this shall be our glory here, and our song forever—
“THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

396 CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN – Ps. 24:3

A Sermon

Delivered on Sunday Morning, June 16th, 1861,

by the

REV. C. H. SPURGEON

At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?” — Psalms 24:3

THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT that this Psalm has a primary reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. He it is who alone ascended up on high by His own merits, and by virtue of a perfect obedience stands in God’s holy place. He alone of mortal race has clean hands, and a pure heart; He has not lifted up His soul unto vanity, nor has He sworn deceitfully; therefore has He received the blessing and righteousness from the God of His salvation. At His ascension, the glorified spirits flooded heaven with music while they sang the language of the seventh verse, “Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in.” It would be a delightful theme for Christian meditation to consider the ascension of Christ, its relation to His work, what we obtain by it, and the glories with which it was accompanied, when, with a shout of sacred joy, He returned to His own throne and sat down forever, having finished the labor which He had undertaken to perform. But this morning, I must take the text apart from its connection, for I desire to make it the basis of a set of parables or illustrations with regard to Christian life. I think we may fairly compare the life of a Christian to the ascent of a mountain, and we may then ask the question, “Who

shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?” This has been, in fact, a favorite metaphor, and even that mighty master of allegory, John Bunyan, who needed never to borrow from another, must have the Hill Difficulty somewhere or other to make his story complete; he must tell how the pilgrim “fell from running to going, and from going to clambering upon his hands and knees because of the steepness of the place.” Without putting any strain upon the text, I conceive I may use it as a most serious question while I picture our course to heaven as an ascent into the hill of the Lord.

Behold, then, before your eyes, believer, the hill of God; it is a high hill even as the hill of Bashan, on the top thereof is that Jerusalem which is from above, the mother of us all. That rest—

“To which our laboring souls aspire,
With fervent pangs of strong desire.”

This mount of which we speak, is not Mount Sinai, but the chosen hill whereon are gathered the glorious company of angels, the spirits of the just made perfect, the Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven. And we are the pilgrims, full often joyous with faith, but sometimes weary and footsore making the best of our way to the top of this mountain of God, where we shall see His face, and rejoice in Him forevermore!

I, your fellow pilgrim, propose the question, “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?” No sooner does the question escape my lips, than I hear a jubilant shout from a company yonder who cry, “We shall—assuredly we shall! There is no doubt about our eternal safety. *We* shall most certainly attain the summit, rest our wearied feet thereon, and dwell with God forever!” Well, confidence is good if it is good, but if it is

presumption, nothing can be worse. Let us, then, look at those who are so sure that they shall ascend into the hill of the Lord.

I notice, first, that some who speak thus are *young beginners*; they have not yet trod the rough part of the mountain; they have only as yet, danced upon the green knolls which are at the base of it—no wonder that their untried sinews find it easy work to ascend an easy pathway! Their limbs are supple, their muscles strong, and the marrow in their bones is as yet not dried up. They laugh at difficult, and they defy danger. “Ah,” they say, “whatever the danger may be, we can brave it; and however stern the toil, we are sufficient to surmount it.” Ah, young man, but be you warned—if you speak thus in your *own* strength, you shall soon find it fail—for the boastful man who journeys in his own strength is like the snail which, though it does but crawl, yet spends its own life, and wastes itself, while it makes but sorry way. *Your* strength is perfect weakness! And your weakness such that difficulties shall soon subdue you, and terror shall cow your spirit! Oh, do you not know there are troubles to come, and you have not endured them yet? There are attacks of Satan; there are temptations from without and from within. You will find it go hard with you if you have nothing but your own strength; you will lie down to die of despair before you have reached one-tenth of the way, and you shall never see the summit. Oh, young man! There are rocks most sharp and steep which mortal strength can never climb, and there are rugged ravines so tangled with briars, and so bestrewn with flint stones, that they shall cut your feet, no, cut your very heart and make it bleed, if you have not something better to trust to than your own strength! How much of our early courage in the Christian life is the courage of the flesh; and though it is a sorrowful thing to lose this, yet it is a blessed loss! To be weak is to be strong, but to be strong is to be weak! It may seem a paradox, but we are never really so mighty as

when our might has fled, and never so truly weak as when we are filled with our own strength, and are reckoning upon ease and security. Be not so bold—take warning and look to a superior arm—

“For they who trust their native strength
Shall melt away and droop and die,”

while those who trust in the Lord—

“Swift as the eagle cuts the air,
Shall mount aloft to His abode!
On wings of love their souls shall fly
Nor tire amidst the heavenly road!”

In looking upon this group who are so confident that they shall ascend the hill of the Lord, I detect some others who speak out of sheer *ignorance*. “Oh,” they say, “it is not far to heaven! It is little matter to be a Christian—you have but to say—‘God be merciful to me,’ and the thing is done—it is but a mere trifle! As for the new birth,” they say, “no doubt it is a great mystery, but possibly it may be of very little importance. It will be, no doubt, found after all, that ministers and Christians make much ado about nothing, for it is a mere run to the mountain summit.” Ah, poor ignorant soul, your folly is too common! To the unaccustomed traveler, there is nothing more deceptive than a lofty Alp. You say, “I could reach the mountaintop in half-an-hour,” and you find it to be a day’s full journey, for its twisting roads and rugged sides, and precipitous ascent come not into the reckoning of a distant observer. And so is it with religion—men think it so simple, so easy—but when they once begin to ascend, they find it stern work to climb to glory! The young soldier puts on his armor, and says,

“One rush and I will win the battle,” but when his banner is torn, and his armor is indented and battered with the heavy blows of the adversary, he finds it quite another thing. I beseech you, count the cost—you who say that you can ascend into the hill of the Lord! I tell you, sirs, that it is so hard a thing that the righteous are scarcely saved; and where shall the ungodly, and the wicked appear? It is by the skin of their teeth, and often so as by fire, that many who are saved enter into the eternal rest. I will not merely say it is *difficult*, but I will say it is *impossible*! It is as easy for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, as for any man to enter into the kingdom of heaven if he relies in any degree upon his own strength, or thinks that the passage thereto is easy, and he needs no help that he may pass through it. Be you persuaded, O ignorant man, that the hill of God is higher than you dream! That is not the summit which you see—the mountain’s brow is far beyond your eyesight! It is higher than your *understanding*; it is loftier than your groveling conceptions; the eagle’s wing has not reached it, nor has his eye beheld it; to the spiritual only is it manifest, and they know that it is higher than the clouds. Be not so ignorantly brave, but learn the road from the lips of Jesus, and then, ask Him to help you to run therein!

But, among this very presumptuous group I perceive others who say, “We shall ascend into the hill of the Lord,” for in their hearts they imagine that they have found out a smooth grassy way which they shall avoid all the roughness of the road. Some new prophet has preached to them a new salvation; some modern impostor has declared to them another way besides the good old path, and they think that they shall now, without wearying their limbs, and blistering their feet, be able to ascend to the summit! Take care, take care, presumptuous soul, for rest assured the greener the path may look, the more is the danger of it! On the sloping sides of the lofty mountains there are

verdant splits so deliciously green, that even after a shower they can look no greener; but only put your foot upon them for a moment, only venture your weight, and you will be swallowed up, unless there is someone near at hand to lay hold upon you! The green mantle covers a tremulous mass of mire; the verdant carpet is only a coverlet for a deadly bed of bottomless bog, for the bogs and quagmires are deceptive enough. And so these new systems of divinity, these new schemes of getting to heaven by some universal fatherhood, or by part-obedience, or gorgeous ceremonies—I tell you, sirs, these are but quagmires which shall swallow up your souls! Green deceptions, they may seem to be like velvet beneath your feet, but they shall be as hell if you dare to trust them! Still to this day, “Strait is the gate and narrow is the way, and few there are who find it.” Still, as there is no royal road to learning, there is no royal road to heaven—no way by which you can pamper your sins, and yet be saved—indulge the flesh, and yet inherit eternal life. There is no way by which you can avoid the new birth, and still escape from the wrath to come! There is no way by which you may enter into heaven with iniquity hidden in your soul. Corruptions must be taken away. Lust must be denied. The right arm must be cut off, and the right eye must be plucked out. There is no new, no easier path to heaven, and you who think you have found it are mistaken in very deed.

Some few others I mark in this group who say, “We shall ascend into the hill of the Lord;” and why, sirs? You look as if you had a heavy load to carry. “Yes! Yes!” they say, “but these are necessities for the journey. We have half a dozen staves under our arm, that if one of them should break we may take another, and we have bottles of rich wine that we may refresh ourselves. We have food so that when we grow weary, we may recruit our strength. We have excellent garments, that when a storm comes on we may cover ourselves from it. We are fully

provided for the journey—we shall certainly ascend the mountain!” This is just the way in which the worldly-wise and self-sufficient talk; and those who are rich and cumbered with much serving in this world. “Ah,” they say, “we shall readily ascend to heaven! We are not poor—we are not ignorant—we are not led away by the depraved vices of the vulgar mass; we shall be able to climb certainly, for we have all things and abound.” Yes, but this is what makes your climbing difficult! You have a load to carry, you would ascend better if you had it not; one staff is good for a traveler, a competence you may seek for, but a bundle of staves must be heavy to carry. And multiplied riches make it hard to climb the narrow way of life, for they bring many cares and many sorrows, and thus, they cause the feet to slip when they might stand fast. Say not because of your wit and your wisdom, and your own moral strength, that you are the better equipped for the journey; these are your *dangers*; your confidences are your weaknesses; that on which you rest shall give you no rest, and that on which you depend—if it is anything but God—shall pierce you to your very soul! O sirs, if you can say, “I shall ascend into the hill of God”—if with your hand upon your heart, you can appeal to heaven and say, “The ground-work of my confidence is not in myself, but in the promise; not in the flesh, but in the Spirit; not in man but in God; not in what I am, but in what God has promised to do for me”—then, be as confident as you will! Then, let no stammering stop you of your boasting, for the joy of the Lord is your strength! But if this confidence springs from anything short of a firm, fixed, simple, unmingled faith in Christ—I pray you give it up—for it is a deadly snare, and will certainly destroy your soul!

We have thus paused to listen to the group who are so sure of ascending the hill of the Lord. But listen! I can hear groans and sobs, and moans. I look around, and certainly my eyes are

gladdened with the aspect of these who seem to be so sad. Why do you mourn, brothers and sisters? Why are *you* sad? “Oh,” they say, “we shall never ascend the hill of God; we shall never reach the topmost height.” brothers and sisters, if I had been allowed to judge, I would have thought you the very men and women who *would* ascend, and yet, you say you shall not? And if I had looked at the other group, I would have thought they *never* would gain the top, and yet, they say they shall! How amazing it is! Men so often misjudge their own state, that the most unlikely think themselves sure, while the most holy are the most afraid! Come, my brothers and sisters, I would stop your mourning, and wipe your eyes; I would put a song into your mouths instead of those notes of lamentation. Let me have your reasons why you think you shall you never ascend the hill of God. The first reply is, “I shall never get there, for I am weak, and the hill is exceedingly high. And, sir, you have told us that godliness is a great steep, and that true religion is a towering alp and I am so weak! To will is present with me, but how to perform I find not. I can do nothing, I am entirely emptied—I know that this can never be performed by me. To perfect holiness and perfect rest I can never come, for I am the weakest of the entire family, and that steep is too lofty to be attained by tottering feet like mine! My bones ache, my knees bend, hot sweat drenches my garments, my head is giddy, and I drag my bleeding feet with anguish from crag to crag!” Oh, my dear brothers and sisters, be of good cheer! If that is your only cause of mourning, lay it aside, for remember while you are weak, it is not *your* strength which is to carry you there, but God’s! If nature had undertaken to ascend into the celestial mountain, indeed, you might despair—but it is divine grace—all-conquering grace that is to do it—

“Weak as you are, yet through His might,
You all things shall perform.”

It is true the hill is steep, but then, God is omnipotent; it is certain that the Alp is high, but still higher is the love and grace of God! He has borne you, He has carried you, and He will carry you even to the end—when you cannot walk He will take you in His arms. And when the road is so rough that you cannot even creep along it, He will bear you as on eagles’ wings till He bring you to His promised rest! Again, I say, if it were *yourself* that you had to look to, it would be right in you to mourn—but, you are not to look to self! Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength. “Ah, but,” says a second, “my difficulty is this—not only am I weak, but I am so sorely tried, the road is very rough to me. You spoke of grass just now—there is none where I am—I have looked at that promise, ‘He makes me to lay down in green pastures,’ and I cannot say it is true of me. Instead of it, I must say, He leads me by the rough torrents, and allows me not to lie down at all, but upon the steep ascents where the stones cut my feet, He leads my weary and sorrowful way. I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath—all His waves, and His billows have gone over me! If the road is rough like this, I shall never ascend into the hill of God.” O Christian, Christian! I beseech you take down your harp from the willow now; for if this is all your fear, it is a foolish fear indeed! Why, “The road is rough”—is this a new thing? The road to heaven never was anything else but rough, and so you may be the better assured that this is the right way! If your road were smooth, you might fear that you were like the wicked who stand in slippery places. Because your pathway is rough, the better foothold for a mountain-climber. There is nothing so much to be feared as that smooth glass-faced rock on which the foot slips back, and

slides. No, those stones and flints give foothold! Stand, then, strong in the strength of God, and be of good courage. Your afflictions are proofs of your sonship! Bastards may escape the rod, but the trueborn child of God must not—would not if he might! You know, too, that these afflictions are working for your good. They are rough waves, but they are driving your ship into port—they are blustering winds, but, they make your ship scud over the briny deep into the eternal rest which remains for your soul!

Your troubles, I tell you, are your best mercies! Where did the Israelites get their jewels, their earrings, and necklaces? Why, from Egypt, only from Egypt! And so you, too, though you have lain among the pots, shall yet be as the dove whose wings are covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold. Let not the roughnesses of the road dismay you—it is the better proof that it is the right road to heaven! Why, you will have a worse trouble yet, perhaps. That is poor consolation, you say—but, then, save your tears till you get to it. Cease your weeping, now, and if this is poor comfort, yet, I think it is true common sense. You will soon come to places where you will have to crawl on your hands and knees; and when you think to grasp the root of some tree to drag you up, you will grasp a thorn, and every thorn shall pierce your flesh; but even then, those thorns shall be heavenly lancets to let out your bad blood; and that roughest part of the road shall be the speediest way to heaven—for the steeper the road—the sooner we shall be at the summit! So be of good cheer, and mourn not until you come where there is more cause to mourn; and then, mourn not, for you shall come to a place where there is more cause for joy! The more sorrow, the more consolation. Therefore up, you poor dispirited one; you shall yet ascend into the hill of God!

“But I,” says another—“I have been sorely tempted. Across my path there is a torrent—a swollen torrent; and I cannot

wade through it. I fear the deep waters would carry me down and dash me on the rocks; I shall never be able to ascend.” During last week, while in one of the wild valleys of Cumberland, we were rained in for two or three days, so that we could not get home; and I feared I would not be able to arrive in town to preach today; for across a high mountain pass which we had to traverse, the little brooks had been swollen by the heavy rains till they roared like thundering rivers, and it would have been impossible for any creature to pass without great danger of being swept away! So it sometimes happens in the Christian’s career. Temptation gets swollen to its brim, no, bursts its banks—and roaring like an angry torrent—it bears all before it! Ah, well, Christian, the Lord knows how to deliver you out of your trouble! He never did yet send temptation without making a way of escape. I was pleased to notice but last Thursday, how, across these brooks, the sheep which fed upon the mountainside could spring from stone to stone, rest a moment in the middle, while the angry flood roared on either side; and then leap and spring again! You would think they would be drowned, but yet, their feet were fast and firm. I thought then, of that text, “He makes my feet like hind’s feet, and makes me to stand on my high places.” Do you not know, tried Christians that others have gone through as much temptation as you, and they did not perish? Nor will you! Job was sorely tried—the brook was swollen, indeed, but it did not carry him away. He was safe, for he could say, “Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him.” Come, now, there are steppingstones across the brook, if you have but faith enough to find them! You shall leap from stone to stone—though they are wide apart—they shall not be too wide for you! And though they shall seem as though they would be moved, yet they shall never be, till you have safely passed by the swelling danger.

“Ah,” says another, “but my trouble is worse than that; I have lost my way altogether. I cannot see a step before me; a thick fog of doubt and fear hangs over me; I shall never ascend into the hill of the Lord.” And we, too, have passed through the damp and clinging mists. The dense mists on the mountain summit wet you through very speedily, ruin the prospect, and cause alarm to the timid. The descent on the left hand seems bottomless, and the ascent on the right appears to be lost in clouds! Mist is the mother of exaggeration, all things loom out in indefinite greatness! The little brook magnified by the haze swells into a river, and then, enlarges into a tremendous lake; while the mountaintops are in the seventh heavens! Every stone becomes a rock in the mist—such is the exaggeration which an imagination can perform when nature wears her veil. So when a poor Christian comes into doubts and fears, everything looks bad and black against him! “Oh,” he says, “I shall surely fall by the hand of the enemy.” It is only a cart-rut—he is sure he will be drowned in it! It is only a stone, which he might put into a sling, and throw at some Goliath, but he fears it is a tremendous rock, and shall never be able to pass by it! He is in a mist and sees no light, and knows not his way. Well, Christian, so you say you shall never get to the top because of this? Why, man, there have been tens of thousands who have been in quite as thick a mist as you, and yet, they have found their way! Many a Christian has had quite as black doubts and fears as you, and yet have come to the light of God at last! Doubts and fears never kill the Christian! They are like a toothache—they are very painful—but they are never mortal! So doubts and fears are very grievous to a believer, but a myriad doubts and fears will not suffice to kill him, or deprive his soul of his interest in Christ! Come, man, do you not know what the text says? “If any man walks in darkness, and sees no light, let him”—do what? Let him despair? No—“Let him trust in the

Lord!” Now is the season for faith. When you have nothing else to trust—put your hand within the hand of the Eternal God, and He will wisely lead, and powerfully sustain, and bring you on your way to the promised rest. Let not these doubts fret you, nor distress you, nor cast you down! It is this very mist, through which David passed, and all God’s people have been surrounded with more or less of it, and it does not prove that you are out of the Way!

“But,” says another, “my woe is worse; I have been going downhill. My faith is not as strong as it was—I am afraid my love has grown cold; I never felt so much of the blackness of my nature as I do now. I think I have grown worse; my depravity has broken up like the floods in the days of Noah. I am sure now it is all over with me. I thought I was vile when I began, but I know I am depraved now. I shall never ascend to the hill of God.” And so, believer, you have been going down hill, have you? Know you not that most men who have to go up, had must sometimes to descend? You say, “How is that?” Well, in climbing a mountain, it often occurs that the path winds downward for a season, to enable the traveler to avoid a precipice, or climb a projecting crag, or reach another peak of the range. Part of the road to Mont Blanc, the king of the Alps, is a descent—and on the great mountain passes there are frequent spots where the load runs readily at the horses heels. “But how can going down help me to get up?” you ask. It is a strange paradox, but I do not believe Christians ever mount better than when they descend. When they find out more of the baseness of their hearts, when they are taken from chamber to chamber, and shown the idolatry and blasphemy of their hearts—it is then, they are growing in divine grace. “Oh,” they say, “it is all over with me now.” It would have been all over with you if you had not come here! “Ah,” they say, “the Lord

is about to slay me now.” No, no—only to slay your *pride*! He is putting you in your proper place—

“If today He deigns to bless us,
With a sense of pardoned sin;
He tomorrow may distress us,
Make us feel the plague within.
All to make us
Sick of self, and fond of Him!”

It is all uphill, brothers and sisters, even when it is downhill! It is all towards God, even when sometimes it seems to be away from Him. And when we are discovering most our own baseness and vileness, it is only that our eyes washed with tears may be like the eyes of doves washed with milk and fitly set—that we may behold the King in His beauty—seeing less of self, and more of Him!

I will not keep you much longer on that point, for I fear by the looks of some of your countenances that I weary you; and yet, I know not why I should; for surely this is a question which is important to each of us, and I seek to put it in as comely a parable as I can. I hear yet another groan. “Ah,” says one, “I shall never ascend into the hill of God.” Why? “Oh,” he says, “because, though I have come up a little way, I feel in such danger.” Brothers and sisters, do you know when a Christian looks down; it is enough to make his head swim? The Christian life is very much like the walk of Blondin upon his lofty rope. There he is, high up in the air; if he look down, he will perish! Sometimes Christians with a little faith think of looking down—and what a cold shudder thrills them! The hypocrite has fallen; I may fall; professor so-and-so has come down; I may come down, too. There is the roar of a tumultuous crowd beneath who are expecting that we may fall. No, they are

longing to say, “Aha! Aha! The eyes of Samson are put out, and the mighty are destroyed.” Now Little-Faith, what business have you with looking down? Look up! Look up! The Scripture does not say, “Let us run with trembling, the race that is set before us, looking to our own tottering legs.” No, it says, “Let us run with patience, the race that is set before us, *looking unto Jesus*.” What if the crag is steep, and the precipice is grim? What is that to you? You will never fall while your faith is fixed on your God! What if the jaws of death are open wide, and his teeth are sharp as knives—what is that to you? Because Christ lives, you also shall live! What if the fires of hell are hot, and the flames of Tophet vehement; what is that to you? There is no damnation to him that is in Christ Jesus—who walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit! Up Christian! Look up! As the poor sea boy, climbing the giddy mast, dares not look down upon the awful deep, but upward to the calm blue sky—where shines the bright unclouded sun—so must you look up to the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning! Or if it is dark with you, look up to yon Star of Bethlehem, who shines still calmly, lovingly, above your head. He bids you silently look unto Him, and stand securely. Look up, poor Little-Faith, and you, Much-Afraid, for you shall ascend into the hill of the Lord!

I shall crave your attention a moment or two, while I now, in the third place—having listened to those who said they could climb, and to those who said they could not climb—picture to you the man or woman who is able to ascend into the hill of the Lord. I think I see him. He has nothing in himself; but he has everything in his God! Let us look at him from the sole of his feet to the crown of his head. You notice, first, that he has put on shoes of iron and of brass. His feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. You will need those shoes, O heavenly pilgrim! When the Lord said He would give you

those shoes of iron, you thought they would be too heavy for you, but you will find out that you have to tread on stones that are hard as iron! When He said He would give you shoes that were made of brass, you thought they would be too strong. You will find it a long way, and a very stiff ascent, and anything other than brass would be worn out! Young Christian, have you had your feet shod yet? You are of no use for climbing unless you have! Unless you have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord, which is the preparation of the gospel of peace, you can never ascend into the hill of Lord. But, observe that the pilgrim is girt about his loins to keep his garment from tripping him up—he is girt with the belt of truth and sincerity. You, too, my hearer, must be sincere in your profession—your heart must be right in the sight of God—or else climbing will be fatal work to you, because you climb presumptuously, and you shall come down desperately. I observe that the pilgrim has in his hand a strong staff. It is cut from the tree of life; it is called the Staff of Promise. And he knows how to thrust his Alpenstock deep into the ground, and to draw himself up thereby, or stop himself as he is going down a crag, lest his foot slipping, he fall. He has a staff of promise. See to it that you get it! Get a promise every day; don't be content when you pray, unless you can plead the promise of God, or else you will be like a man going to the bank without a check! You must take the promise when you go to God, and you will get that bestowed upon you which the promise guarantees. Go not up the mountain, Pilgrim, without this staff!

Take warning once more. If yonder pilgrim is ever to ascend the summit, his shoes of iron and of brass will not be enough—his belt not enough, his staff not enough—he must have a guide! He who travels without a guide will lose his way in this ascent to the hill of God. It reminds me of the old story of the man who said to his advocate, when he was about to be

tried—“I’ll be hanged if I don’t plead for myself.” “You will be hanged if you do,” said the lawyer. So there are some men who say they will try for *themselves*—they will be their own *guide*—they will find their own way. Yes, but they will be lost if they try it! If they put their souls into their own keeping, and rely upon their own wisdom, they shall find their wisdom to be fully worthless! Christian, rely upon your Guide, your Comforter—the Holy Spirit. Go not one step of the way apart from His monitions and His promptings! Wait on Him. Be of good courage, saying, “I waited patiently for the Lord, for He will assuredly direct me in the path of peace.”

But, even with a guide, that man will never gain the summit unless He marks the way. And what is the way? The way to the hill of God, you know, as well as I can tell you, is Christ Himself. “I am,” He says, “the way.” We begin in Christ, we must go on with Christ, we must end with Christ! As guilty sinners, we come to Christ for pardon. As needy sinners, we must come to Him to receive of His fullness, day by day, and at the last, when with joyful spring we shall leap to the flowery summit and be safe—that last spring must still be taken in the one blood-besprinkled way—the open side, the pierced hands and feet of Christ! There is no other way to the summit of the hill of God—there is none—and he that thinks there may be, shall be mistaken now—and fatally deluded at the last! Be wise, then, Pilgrim, and with your shoes upon your feet, with your staff in your hand, your belt about your loins, your guide by your side, and the loving Lord before you, climb with patience into the hill of God! But, take care that you lay aside every weight, and the sin that does so easily beset you, or the road will be painful to you, and your end shall not be such as you would desire.

I come, in the last place, to complete the picture. I come to end the allegory, and to stimulate the exertions of every climber of this heavenly mountain, by describing what is to be

seen and to be enjoyed upon the summit. He who shall ever climb the hill of God, and come to heaven at last, will find, first of all, that all his toil is done—

“Servant of God, well done!
Rest from your loved employ,
The battle’s fought, the victory’s won,
Enter your rest of joy!”

No crags, no slippery places now; no roaring torrents, nor ascending or descending paths—

“Jerusalem, my happy home,
Name ever dear to me,
Now shall my labors have an end,
In joy and peace and thee.”

Brothers and sisters do you and I think enough of heaven? Do we not think too much of earth? Do we not think too much of the toil, and too little of the time when it shall all be over? A few more days and years, and you and I, believers, shall have done fighting with Satan, have done with temptations, have done with cares, and have done with woes! An hour’s work and an eternity of rest! One day’s toil; and when I shall have accomplished as a hireling, my day, then You come, O sweet and gentle rest! “For they rest from their labors, and their works do follow them.” Courage, pilgrim, courage! Up that crag, man! Now put hand and knee to it—up!—for when you have climbed a little higher, yes, but a very little, you shall lie down to rest, and then no more fatigue or sorrow. And there too, when we come to the top of the hill of God, we shall be above all the clouds of worldly care and sin, and temptation.

Oh, how deep is the rest of the people of God above! How calm is their sky!—

“No vain discourse shall tempt my soul,
Nor trifles vex my ears.”

No need to go out to a business which distracts my longing spirit. No need to toil at a labor which fatigues my body, and thus puts my soul into an ill state for prayer; no need to mix with worldly-minded men, who make a jest of my solemnities, and would engage my mind with trifles unworthy of notice. No, above the world, above its distractions and attractions, my soul shall rise when it shall ascend into the hill of God! And, brethren, what a prospect there shall be from the summit! When we shall mount to the hill of God, what sights we shall see! You know from lofty mountains you can look on that side, and see the lakes and the rivers; and on this side, the green and laughing valleys; and far away, the wild black forest! The view is wide, but what a view is that which we shall have in heaven! There shall I know even as I am known. “Here we see through a glass darkly, but there, face to face.” And chief and foremost—best of all—my eyes shall see the King in His beauty! We shall behold His face! We shall look into His eyes; we shall drink love from the fountain of His heart, and hear the music of His love from the sweet organ of His lips. We shall be entranced in His society, paradised on His bosom! Up, Christian, up! Christ waits for you! Come, tread the thorny way and climb—for Christ stands on the summit stretching out His hands and saying, “Come up here; to him who overcomes will I give to sit upon My throne, even as I have overcome, and have set down with My Father upon His throne.”

And there is this sweet reflection to close with—all that we shall see upon the top of the hill of God will be ours! We look

from earthly mountains, and we see, but we do not possess. That mansion yonder is not ours. That crystal beam belongs not to us—those wide-spread lawns are beautiful, but they are not in our possession. But on the hilltops of heaven, all that we see, we shall possess! We shall possess the streets of gold, the harps of harmony, the palms of victory, the shouts of angels, the songs of cherubim, the joy of the Divine Trinity, and the song of God as He reigns in His love, and rejoices over us with singing! No, God the Eternal One Himself shall be ours and ours forever and forever! What better encouragement can I give to you poor tired, worn-out, wearied, and all-but-despairing Christians? Take courage! The last six days have tired you very much. Put away your trials today—you have had enough to cast you down—but, is not the reflection of today enough to lift you up? Oh, remember the summit will repay you for the toil in climbing it! Though rough may be the road, it is but short at the longest— and the rest, the rest, will make amends! O Christian! Men will suffer more to get rich than you do to be found in Christ! Go on, go on, stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved—and having done all—still stand!

Would that some here who have never tried to climb that mountain would remember that if they climb it not now, they will have to *descend* forever! If now they turn not their faces to the steep ascent, and go up it like men, they will fall eternally! Good God, what a fall! On what slippery places do they stand! I see them reeling even now! What a desperate dash was that! They fall, they fall, on through darkness, through blackest darkness, black as death and hell—on, on they fall, for the pit of hell is bottomless! Down, down, descending from the lower depths to the lowest depths, from hell to hell's profoundest deep, from eternity of woe, on, on, on to woe trebled, multiplied sevenfold! May God grant that we, having faith in

Christ, may tread the blood-marked way, and enter into “The rest which remains for the people of God!”

397 FIRE! FIRE! FIRE! – ISA. 43:2

**A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Morning, June 23rd, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned;
neither shall the flame kindle upon you.” — Isaiah 43:2**

BEFORE WE EXPLAIN the metaphor of the text, it may be well for us to remark that we are not sufficiently grateful, I fear, for the preservation which God affords to us from fire. To be startled at the dead of night with the alarming cry, and to find one's self and children and goods in danger of being immediately consumed, must be no small trial. I have felt, myself, extreme gratitude to God that while both on the right hand, and on the left, the flames have raged, He has been pleased to spare to us this temple of our solemnities, this place where we delight to worship. And is it not meet that we should each and all render to Him our hearty thanks for sparing our habitations—preserving the roof under which we rest—enabling us to go out, and to come in in perfect safety? Or, probably, I may be addressing some this morning who have escaped from the very midst of the fires. Let such not only bless God for preservation in the past, but let them celebrate His goodness in plucking them as brands out of the burning. Let them be extremely grateful to God, that while others this day are dying as a black heap of ashes who but yesterday were living men, we are still in the land of the living, unburned and

unsinged. I know that many of you, during the past week, and again last night, witnessed a blaze of awful grandeur, in which tongues of flame, mountains of fire, and pillars of smoke made a spectacle to be gazed at with interest, while it produced terrors and apprehensions that could awe the wildest mob into silence. With you and me, it is a common mercy to be preserved day by day, and night by night from the devouring element. Yet, when the dreadful catastrophe is within view—when those we know personally, or by repute, are sufferers—and when at the same time we look on with a sense of our own present security—then, surely, we ought to give more than a common expression of gratitude to God for mercies that at other times we are too apt to pass over unheeded as but the effects of a common providence.

Never was a truer sentence uttered than when one said, “These mercies are not valued until they are lost, and these preservations are not esteemed until they are withdrawn.” Let us thank God while we have the mercies, lest He be provoked by our ingratitude and take forth His rod and scourge us. Then, indeed, might we cry out under the smart, and wish and desire that we had our mercies back again! Thus, much I could not in my conscience withhold at a time when there are judgments around us enough to make us tremble, and mercies enough in the little circles of some to make us exceedingly grateful. Let us now take the text in its real significance. Of course, the walking through the fire here is put for the severest form of trouble—you have, in the commencement of the verse, trouble described as passing through the water. This represents the overwhelming influence of trial in which the soul is sometimes so covered that it becomes like a man sinking in the waves. “When you go through the rivers”; those mountain torrents which with terrific force are often sufficient to carry a man away; this expresses the force of trouble, the power with which

it sometimes lifts a man from the foothold of his stability, and carries him before it. “When you pass through the rivers they shall not overflow you.” But going through the fire expresses not so much the overwhelming character and the upsetting power of trouble as the actual consuming and destructive power of trouble and temptation. The metaphor is more vivid, not to say more terrible, than that which is employed in the first sentence, and yet, vivid and awful though it is, it is certainly not too strong a figure to be used as the emblem of the tribulations, temptations, and afflictions through which the Church and people of God have been called to pass! We may apprise the richness of the promise in proportion to the astonishing character of the metaphor, and we ought to value the privilege which it confers in the precise ratio of the dreadful character of the danger against which it preserves us. “When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you.”

We shall talk of three things, this morning, as the Holy Spirit may enable us. First of all, a *terrible pathway*—walking around the fire; secondly, an *awful danger*—the danger of being burned and utterly consumed; and thirdly, a *double insurance*—“You shall not be burned; neither shall the fire kindle upon you.”

I. First, then, let us speak a little upon this **TERRIBLE PATHWAY**.

The sacramental host of God's elect has never had an easy road along which to journey. I see the fields on fire—the prairie is in a blaze, the very heavens are like a furnace—and the clouds seem rather to be made of fire than water. Across that prairie lies the pathway to heaven, beneath that blazing sky, the whole Church of God must make its perpetual journey. It started at the first in fire, and its very glory at the last shall take place in the midst of the fiery passing away of all things. When first there was a Church of God on earth, in the person of Abel, it

was persecuted. Cain lifted up his cruel club to slay his brother; and when the children of Seth were the representatives of God's chosen, they were without doubt the subject of the jeer and gibe of the descendants of Cain. Noah, the preacher of righteousness, endured during his 120 years, the hardness of heart, and carelessness of an unthinking world. He and his family, who were the remnant of the Church in the latter part of those days, were constantly exposed to the laughter and persecution of men. When God had destroyed the earth with water, and the whole race of man was contained within the ark, you would think that then, certainly, the Church within the ark would be secure from molestation. But no, we find Ham ready to detect the failings of his parents, and no doubt a ringleader of everything that was vile and vicious, just as we have reason to hope that some of his brethren adhered to the truest God. From that day forward, whether you read through the life of Abraham, or Isaac, or Jacob, it still stands true, "He that is born after the flesh persecutes him that is born after the Spirit." Whether we refer you to the history of Israel by the side of the brick-kilns of Egypt, or to the host of God constantly beset by the marauders of the Amalekites, you still find it to be true that through much tribulation, the people of God must wade their way to Canaan!

And if you look further on in history, between David and Saul, between Hezekiah and Sennacherib, between the faithful followers of God after the captivity who would rebuild the Temple, and Sanballat the Horonite, between the Maccabees and Antiochus Epiphanes—there must always be preserved a deadly feud—to let it be seen that the world must hate God's people, and must harass them and seek to hunt them out, while they, on the other hand, must steadily pursue their onward march through the midst of billows of fire till they come at last to their eternal rest! Find me the abode of the Church of God,

and I can smell the furnace not far off! Show me the follower of the God of Abraham, and I shall soon find the host of enemies ready for the attack. Up till the days of the Savior, the kingdom of heaven suffered violence—not only from its friends who would take it—but from those enemies who would assault it. From the blood of Abel down to the blood of Zecharias, the son of Barachias, the pathway of the Church has been a blood-besprinkled time! Since that day what tongue can tell the sufferings of the people of God? Since Christ became Martyr as well as Redeemer, has there been a season in which God's people have not somewhere or other been made to feel that they are not of the world, and that the world does not love them because they are not of the world? In apostolic times, Stephen expires beneath a shower of stones; James is killed with a sword; certain others of the saints are vexed; believers are scattered abroad. The Roman lion takes up the fight; Nero delights in the gore of the Christians, and smears the confessors of that holy faith with pitch, and sets them in his gardens that they might be literally, as they were spiritually, the lights of the world! Let the catacombs of Rome witness to their sorrowful lives, and let the capitol witness to their terrible deaths. Let the old dungeons, some of which still remain, testify to the places where they wore out their dreary lives, and let the blood-stained Campus Martius still show where they cheerfully surrendered those lives for Christ!

Oh, if the lands could speak; if the Earth could vomit forth her blood—what stories could still be told of the way they were slain! Some of them were tortured; others sawn asunder; some stoned and others burnt to death—though of them the world was not worthy. All the Roman Emperors, with but few exceptions, were persecutors; and the Christian emperors were as bad as the Pagan, for the Christian emperors *were not Christians*, nor were they members, as I believe, of a Christian

Church! The Christian Church, and especially that Church of which we are still members—which has never defiled its garments, but which, never having had any alliance with the Church of Rome, has never needed to be reformed—that Church under its different names, Paulitians, Novations, Albigenses, Lollards, Wyckliffites, Anabaptists, Baptists—has always suffered! It matters not what state, what Church may have been dominant—whether it has been Christian or anti-Christian—the pure Church of Christ has always been the victim of persecution! And though she has never persecuted, but has always maintained inviolate disunion from the state, and an utter hatred of all laws which would bind the conscience of man, yet has she been especially destitute, afflicted and tormented, and if she has today a little breathing room, perhaps it is rather owing to the timidity which has made us keep back our sentiments, than to any charity towards ourselves. Find the Church of Christ wherever you will, and you shall find her scorned and despised of man! Find her in Scotland, and her Covenanters have to hide themselves in the midst of the mountains, and read the Word of God by the lightning flash to escape from the dragoons of Claverhouse. Find her in England, and where was she? Not in the cathedrals of her cities, but in the dungeons of her rural towns, like Bedford with John Bunyan! Not among the great and noble who were the persecutors, but among the poor and conscientious who were the persecuted! “If you want to find the drunks and sinners of the worst dye,” said one of our preachers at or before Cromwell’s time, “you can find them in church and state, but if you wish to find the men who are holy, and who serve God, you must look into the felon’s dungeons for them, for that is where they have been cast by the powers that be.” Everywhere, from the first day until now, it is not respectable to be a follower of Christ! If we follow Christ fully and faithfully

before God, it is not equitable and praiseworthy before men. To take up His cross, and to perform the ceremonies which He ordains, man hates! To adhere to truths of God which never were, and never can be palatable to the carnal mind of man, is and ever has been, to excite animosity! The pathway of the Church, then, has been one of fire and flame. As it has been so with the Church, we may suspect there is some reason for it—and that reason has to be found in the great fact that the Church is in an enemy's country! She is not among her friends—she is a pilgrim and a stranger upon the earth. She is a bird that has lost her place, and all the birds round about her are against her because she is a speckled one, and belongs not to the common flock. If we were of the world, the world would love its own, but “because,” said Christ, “you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” “We know,” He said, “It hated Me before it hated you.” True Christians are aliens, foreigners—men who speak another speech, men who are actuated by different motives, men who live for different ends—who are governed by different maxima from the rest of the men of this world! Therefore it is that their pathway must be one of trial and opposition. All things the Christian teaches are so dead against the pleasures of the worldling, and his gain, that it is no wonder he opposes us! Men hate the gospel because the gospel does not like them. That Church is never true to her Christ, nor true to herself, which does not draw upon herself the hatred of ungodly men by a faithful testimony against their sins!

It has fared well with the Church when she has been persecuted, and her pathway has been through fire. Her feet are shod with iron and brass. She ought not to tread on paths strewn with flowers; it is her proper place to suffer. Christ redeemed the world with agonies, and the Church must teach the world by the example of her anguish. First of all, the blood

of Christ was shed meritoriously, and afterwards, the blood of His Church is shed testimonially, to win the world by suffering. When you hear of the massacre of Christians in Madagascar, weep for their deaths, but do not be utterly cast down. This is a good work! This is the way the Church grows! There is no loss in the army of Christ when the best preachers fall, and the mightiest evangelists are put to death. They are not lost—the blood is well shed, and gloriously well spent! It is buying victory. It is procuring crowns for Jesus Christ. It is, after all, accomplishing higher results by *dying* than could have been effected by *doing*. It is under the heaviest fire of artillery that the loyal, the brave, and the true do the most daring feats of prowess. When one hero falls, from his ashes, other heroes arise. The post of danger is the post of honor, therefore fresh aspirants will be found ready to lead the brigade! Moreover, my friends, if the path of fire is always a path of terror, it is often a path of progress. As melancholy as it is to mark the ruins of an inferno while the dying embers smolder, how often you must have observed more majestic edifices raised to replace the structures that have been consumed! Thus, fearful disasters are made to stimulate industry, and nourish enterprise.

No doubt the sufferings of the Church, and the fact that she has to pass through the fire, must be ascribed to the great truth that, thus, her God is glorified!

Brothers and sisters, you and I do not glorify God much; for we have very little to suffer. The blood red crown of martyrdom is such an object of ambition, or it should be to the believer, that he might almost regret that it is not in his power to coin it. Suffer?! What do we suffer? Somebody slanders our character; what is that? Somebody abuses us in the newspaper; what is that? We are accused of one crime and another; what can it matter to a man who knows his conscience is right in the sight of God? What does he care if all the babbling tongues of

all the liars in earth and hell should be let loose against him? He can bear all that, and endure it quietly. It is nothing! When I read the stories of the Book of Martyrs, and note how our great reformers fought for Christ, and manfully won the victory, I blush for ourselves! Why, brothers and sisters, we live in such silken times, that glory is scarcely possible to us. We have much to do but we have nothing to suffer; we cannot prove our love to Christ as they did. They indeed were a highly honored people who were permitted to glorify Christ even in the very fires! Look at it in this light—and the light afflictions you have to endure will seem to be as nothing at all—when you think of the weight of glory which *they* shall bring to your Lord, and to yourself. But as history confirms the statement that the Church of Christ must walk through the fire, so does the history of each individual Christian teach him that he must walk through the fire, too—

“The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown.”

Through much tribulation we must inherit the kingdom. Think it not a strange thing when the fiery trial shall happen to you. If you have the common afflictions of the world, do not wonder. You must have them. The same thing happens both to the evil, and to the good. You lose in business, you have reverses and disappointments—do not stagger at these in the way to heaven! You must have these—they are necessary to your spiritual health. Worse than that, you have strange temptations—you are placed in a position where you are constantly exposed to sin. It must be so! This, too, is the pathway of God's people! You must have these fiery temptations, that, being tried in the fire, you may come forth as “gold seven times purified.” You have mental anxieties.

Neither let these seem a wonder to you; they fall to the lot of all the saints of the Most High. Moreover, you will have to endure the attacks of Satan—you must go through the valley of the shadow of death, and fight with Apollyon as Christian did—you are not to be exempted from the hardness of Christian warfare! If you will mount the hill, you must climb; if you are to win the crown, you must win it by sheer might. Think not this a strange thing. And if in doing good, you meet with difficulties, let not that stagger you. It is but right and natural. I tell you again—if there is any pathway in which there is not fire, tremble! But if your lot is hard, thank God for it! If your sufferings are great, bless the Lord for them, and if the difficulties in your pathway are many, surmount them by faith—but let them not cast you down! Be of good courage, and wait on the Lord, setting this constantly in your minds, that He has not promised to keep you *from* trouble, but to preserve you *in it*. It is not written, “I will save you *from* the fire,” but, “I will save you *in* the fire”—not, “I will quench the coals,” but, “They shall not burn you.” Not, “I will put out the furnace,” but, “The flames shall not kindle upon you.” Write it down, brothers and sisters, and expect it to come true—that in this world you shall have tribulation! Only follow your glorious leader, be it through flood or flame!

II. We will now turn to our second point—there is **AN AWFUL DANGER**.

The promise of the text is based on a prophecy that follows it. As I glance my eyes down the Chapter, I see that it tells us how God taught His people by terrible things in the past; and how He has terrible lessons to teach them in the future. If the judgment of Egypt, and of Ethiopia, and Seba, are behind us, we have startling destinies that rise up to view before us! There is a people to be gathered in, and we are to be the agents in gathering them. Fear not, says the Lord, though you walk

through the fire in fulfilling My mission. God speaks to the north, “Give up.” And to the south, “Keep not back. Bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the ends of the earth.” But the manner of Egypt is repeated again. The monarch said, “I will not let them go.” Jealousy is stirred. The fire burns; the coals thereof have a vehement flame. And they who come forth from the bondage of this world must walk through the fire—even as those who came forth from Egypt had to pass through water. The fire of prophecy is no poetic fiction; it is real fire; it *will* burn. If it does not burn the believer, it is not for lack of energy—it is because some supernatural restraint is laid on it, or some supernatural protection vouchsafed to the saint. My brothers and sisters, the Church has had very painful experiences that persecution is a fire which does burn. How many ministers of Christ, when the day of tribulation came, forsook their flocks, and fled? When King Edward the Sixth was on the throne, there were many who professed to be Protestants, and preached justification by faith. When Mary returned, the Vicar of Bray was but a specimen of a great class—his principles being to keep alive! When again Elizabeth was upon the throne, there were plenty who found it to be profitable to profess the reformed faith; but when the Acts of Conformity were passed afterwards—by which those who had before had a Christian freedom in the Church of England—were driven out! There were some who said they did not love prelacy, but hated it! And others who had before professed the old Puritan doctrines—finding that their livings were to be lost thereby—held fast to this world, and let the things of the next world shift for themselves. Too many have forsaken the Church as Demas forsook Paul! Their piety would not stand the fire—they could walk with Christ in silver slippers—but they could not go barefoot. They had no objection whatever to accompany Him to His throne, but they had some slight

difficulties about going with Him to His cross. They would not mind bearing the weight of His glory, but the weight of the cross of tribulation was much too great for their constitutions. Persecution is a fire which *does* burn!

Again—I see iniquity raging on every side. Its flames are fanned by every wind of fashion. And fresh victims are being constantly drawn in. It spreads to every class. Neither the palace, nor the hovel are safe. Nor the lofty piles that are raised for neither merchandise, nor the graceful edifice that is constructed for worship. Iniquity, whose contagion is fearful as fire, spreads and preys upon all things that are homely and comely—things useful, and things sacred are not exempt. We must walk through the fire! We who are God’s witnesses must stand in its very midst to pour the streams of living water upon the burning fuel—and if not able to quench it—at least we must strive to prevent its spread. There are young men whose youthful lusts, inflammable as they are, have not yet ignited. They are in imminent danger. “Fire! Fire!” we may well cry. We may give the alarm this morning to you young men who are in the midst of indecent companions. I may cry, “Fire!” to you who are compelled to live in a house where you are perpetually tempted to evil. I may cry, “Fire!” to you who are marked each day, and have to bear the sneer of the ungodly—“Fire!” to you who are losing your property, and suffering in the flesh, for many have perished thereby. Oh, may God grant you strength! I see today before my mind’s eyes, the blackened skeletons of hundreds of fair professions. Multitudes—multitudes have perished in the valley of temptation that once, to all human judgment, had bid fair for heaven, and made a show in the flesh! How many, too, have fallen under the attacks of Satan! This is a fire that truly does burn! Many a man has said, “I will be a pilgrim.” But he has met Apollyon on the road, and he has turned back. Many a man has put on the harness, but he has

given up the battle quickly—put his hand to the plow and looked back. There are more pillars of salt than one! If Lot's wife were a solitary specimen, it would be well—but there have been tens of thousands who, like she, have looked back to the plains of Sodom! And like she has, as they are in their spirit, have stood forever what they were—lost souls. We ought not to look upon our dangers with contempt; they are dangers; they are trials; we ought to look upon them as fires. Oh, they are fires! If you think they are not fires, you are mistaken. If you enter then, in your own strength, saying, "Oh I can bear them," you will find that they are real fires, which, with forked tongues, shall lick up your blood, and consume it in an instant—if you have not some better guard than your own creature power.

III. I will not tarry longer here, because I want to get to the pith and marrow of the promise. "Though you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you." Here is **A DOUBLE INSURANCE**.

Dr. Alexander, an eminent and most admirable American commentator, says there appears to be some mistake in the translation here, because he thinks the two sentences are an anti-climax. "You shall not be burned." And then follows, "neither shall the flame kindle upon you." It strikes me, however, that in the second clause, we have the higher gradation of a climax. "You shall not be burned," to the destruction of your life, nor even scorched to give you the most superficial injury, for "the flames shall not kindle upon you." Just as when the three holy children came out of the fiery furnace, it is said, "Upon their bodies the fire had no power, nor was a hair of their head singed; neither were their coats changed, nor had the smell of fire passed on them." So the text seems to me to teach that the Christian Church under all its trials has not been consumed, but more than that—it has not lost anything by its trials! The Lord's Church has never been

destroyed yet by her persecutors and her trials; they have thought they crushed her, but she lives still. They had imagined that they had taken away her life, but she sprang up more vigorous than before. I suppose there is not a nation out of which Christ's Church has ever been utterly driven! Even Spain, which seemed at last to have accomplished it by the most persevering barbarities, still finds a few believers to be a thorn in the side of her bigotry! And as for our own denomination—in the very country where, by the most frightful massacres it was believed that the sect of Anabaptists had been utterly extinguished—our good and esteemed brother, Mr. Oncken, has been the means of reviving it, so that throughout all Germany, and in parts of Denmark and Prussia, and Poland and even Russia itself, we have sprung up into a new, vigorous and even wonderful existence! And in Sweden, where, under Lutheran government, the most persecuting edicts have been passed against us, we have been astonished to find within 10 years, 300 churches suddenly spring up—the truth has in it a living seed which is not to be destroyed!

But I have said that the Church not only does not lose her existence, but she does not lose anything at all. The Church has never lost her numbers. Persecutions have winnowed her, and driven away the chaff, but not one grain of wheat has been taken away from the heap. No, not even in visible fellowship has the Church been decreased by persecution! She is like Israel in Egypt. The more they were afflicted, the more they multiplied. Was a minister put to death today? Ten young men came the next morning before the Roman proctor, and offered themselves to die, having that very night been baptized for the dead minister, having made their confession of faith that they might occupy his position. "I fill up the vacancy in the Church, and then die as he did." Was a woman strangled or tortured publicly? Twenty women appeared the next day, and craved to

suffer as she suffered, that they might honor Christ! Did the Church of Rome in more modern times burn one of our glorious reformers—John Huss—yet did not Martin Luther come forward, as if the ashes of Huss had begotten Luther? When Wycliffe had passed away, did not the very feet of Wycliffe being persecuted help to spread his doctrines—and were there not found hundreds of young men who in every market-town in England read the Lollard's Scriptures, and proclaimed the Lollard's faith? And so depend upon it—it shall always be! Give a dog a bad name, and you hang him; give a Christian a bad name, and you honor him! Do but give to any Christian some ill name, and before long a Christian denomination will take that name to itself, and it will become a title of honor. When George Fox was called, “Quaker,” it was a strange name, one to laugh at—but those men of God who followed him called themselves Quakers, too—and so it lost its reproach! They called the followers of Whitefield and Wesley, “Methodists”—they took the title of Methodists, and it became a respectful designation! When many of our Baptist forefathers, persecuted in England, went over to America to find shelter, they imagined that among the Puritans they would have a perfect rest. But Puritan liberty of conscience meant, “The right and liberty to think as they did, but no toleration to those who differed.” The Puritans of New England, as soon as ever a Baptist made his appearance among them, persecuted him with as little compunction as the Episcopalians had the Puritans! No sooner was there a Baptist, than he was hunted up, and brought before his own Christian brethren! Mark you, he was brought up for fine, for imprisonment, confiscation, and banishment before the very men who had themselves suffered persecution! And what was the effect of this? The effect has been that in America, where we were persecuted, we are the largest body of Christians! Where the fire burnt the most furiously, there the

good old Calvinistic doctrine was taught, and the Baptist became the more decidedly a Baptist than anywhere else—with the most purity, and the least dross. Nor have we ever lost the firmness of our grip upon the fundamental doctrine for which our forefathers stained the baptismal pool with blood—by all the trials and persecutions that have been laid upon us—and by God's grace never shall we!

Upon the entire Church, at the last, there shall not be even the smell of fire. I see her come out of the furnace. I see her advance up the hill towards her final glory with her Lord and Master, and the angels look at her garments; they are not tattered. No, the fangs of her enemies have not been able to make a single rent therein. They draw near to her. They look upon her flowing ringlets, and they are not crisp with heat—they look upon her very feet—and though she has trodden the coals, they are not blistered! And her eyes have not been dried up by the furiousness of the seven times heated flame. She has been made more beautiful, fairer, and more glorious by the fires; but hurt she has not been, nor can she be! Turn, then, to the individual Christian, and remember that the promise stands alike firm and fast with each believer. Christian, if you are truly a child of God, your trials cannot destroy you, and what is better still, you can lose nothing by them. You may seem to lose for today, but when the account comes to be settled, you shall not be found to be a farthing the loser by all the temptations of the world or of all the attacks of Satan which you have endured! No, more, you shall be wondrously the gainer! Your trials having worked patience, and experience shall make you rich. Your temptations, having taught you your weaknesses, and shown you where your strength lies, shall make you strong.

From your first trouble, till the last enemy shall be destroyed, you shall not lose a fraction, jot, or tittle, by anything

or everything which God in His providence, or the world in its fury, or Satan in his craftiness, shall ever be able to lay upon you. Upon you, not the smell of fire shall have passed; you shall not be burned, neither shall your clothes, nor your hats—but like the men that you read of in Daniel—you shall be wholly preserved intact from the flame!

I shall close now, having spoken the general truth of God by making some particular applications of this precious promise. There is a brother here who during the last three or four months has had wave upon wave of affliction—everything goes against him! He is an upright, honest, indefatigable merchant, yet, let him do what he will, his substance wastes away like snow before the sun! It appears that for every ship of his, the wind blows the wrong way, and where others win by the venture, he loses all—

“He sees each day new straights attend,
And wonders when the scene shall end.”

When I spoke of walking through the fire just now, he said, “Ah that is what I have been doing! I have been walking through it these months—to God and my own soul alone is it known how hot the furnace is.” Brother, will you take home my text this morning? Perhaps God sent you here not for the sermon, but for the text. Perhaps you strolled here today, not being a regular attendant, on purpose that this text might comfort you. “When you go through the fire, you shall not be burned.” When your troubles are all over, you shall still be left, and what is more, “neither the flame shall kindle upon you.” When the finishing time comes, you shall not be any the loser! While you think you have lost substance, you shall find, when you read Scripture, that you only lose shadows. Your substance was always safe, being laid up in the keeping of Christ in heaven.

You shall discover in the issue that these trials of yours were the best things that could happen to you. The day shall come when you will say with David, “I will sing of judgment and mercy.” “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I have kept Your Word.” Or perhaps there is some young woman here—and the case I am about to paint is a very common one— alas, too common in this city! You love the Savior, my sister, but you are very poor, and you have to earn your living by that sorriest of all means. When the sun rises in the morning, He sees you with that needle in your hand—

“Sewing at once with a double thread
A shroud as well as a shirt,”

and all day long you have scarcely time to rest for meals. And in the evening, when your fingers are worn, and your eyes are heavy, you shall have need to refrain from sleep because the pittance is so small, that you can scarcely live upon it. We know hundreds of that class who always constrain our pity because they work so hard for so little wage. Perhaps your mother is dead, and your father does not care about you. He is a drunken sot, and you would be sorry to meet him perhaps in the street. You have no helper, no friends. You do not care to tell anybody. You would not like to take anything if charity should offer it to you. You feel it is the hardest thing of all to be tempted as you are. There seems to you to be by the path, the open road to plenty, and in some degree to delight. But you have said, “No, no,” and you have loathed the temptation, and by God’s grace you have stood—and I have known how, year after year, some of you have fought with temptation, and struggled on when sometimes you were well-near starved. But you would not do this great wickedness against God.

My sister, I pray you take the encouragement of this text to strengthen you for the future battles. You have been going through the fires, but you are not consumed yet, and I bless God, upon your garments the smell of fire has not passed. Hold on, my sister, hold on! Through all the sorrow you have, and all the bitterness which is heavy enough to crush your spirit, hold on—for your Master sees you! He will encourage and strengthen you, and bring you more than conqueror through it all in the end! I address, too, this morning, some youthful minds. Young men who love Christ, and as soon as they get home after attending the house of prayer, the taunting inquiry made by their fellow-workmen is—“You have been to some meeting house, I dare say.” How cruel sometimes worldly young men are to Christian young men! Cruel, for when there are a dozen worldlings, and only one Christian, they consider it to be honorable for the dozen to set upon one! Twelve big tall fellows will sometimes think it a fine game to pass from hand to hand some little lad of fifteen, and make sport and mockery of him. There is honor, it is said, among thieves—but there seems to be no honor at all among worldlings when they get a young Christian in this way. Well, young man, you have borne with it. You have said, “I will hold my tongue, and won’t say a word,” though your heart was hot within you, and while you were musing, the fire burned. Remember what I have often said to you—the anvil does not get broken even if you keep on striking it—but it breaks all the hammers. Do the same! Only hold on, and these fires shall not consume you. If the fires should burn up your piety, it would only prove that your piety was not worth having; if you cannot stand a few jokes and jeers, why, you are not built together in that habitation of God which He has made fireproof! Bear up, and in the end you will find that this hard lot of yours—this severe discipline—did you a deal of good, and made you a better man than you ever would

have been if you had been rocked on the lap of piety, and kept from the battle. In later years, your high and eminent post of usefulness may be, perhaps, owing to the severe and harsh discipline to which you were put in your younger days. “It is good for a man that he bears the yoke in his youth.”

Or, maybe, I am speaking to someone who has met with opposition from his own ungodly relations. Remember how Jesus said, “I am come to send fire on the earth, and what will I, if it is already kindled? From henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, two against three, and three against two.” Perhaps your father has threatened you, or what is still bitterer, your husband has threatened to discard you. Now, indeed, you are walking through the fires. He rails at your godliness, makes a mockery of everything you love—and does his best by cruelty to break your heart! My dear sister in Christ, you shall not be burned by the fire. If grace is in your heart, the *devil* can’t drive it out, much less your husband. If the Lord has called you by His grace, all the men on earth, and all the fiends in hell cannot reverse the calling—and you shall find in the end that you have not suffered any loss—the flame has not kindled upon you! You shall go through the fire and bless God for it! From a dying bed, or at least through the gates of Paradise, you shall look back upon the dark path of the way, and say it was well—it was well for me that I had to carry that cross, and that now I am permitted to wear this crown. Who of this congregation is on the Lord’s side this morning? While Jehovah speaks on high in the thunder, let us speak on earth in tones of earnestness. Who is on the Lord’s side among you? You who are not, be warned—“Tophet is ordained of old. He has made it deep and large. The pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, does kindle it.” You who are on His side, set up your banners! He says, “Fear not, I am with

you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon you.”

May the Lord bless the words we have spoken; though hastily suggested to our mind, and weakly delivered to you, the Lord bless them for Christ's sake. Amen.

398 THE NEW NATURE – I PET. 1:23-25

**A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Morning, June 30th, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

“Being born-again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides forever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower thereof falls away: but the word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.” — I Peter 23-25

PETER HAD EARNESTLY exhorted the scattered saints to love each other “with a pure heart fervently,” and he wisely fetches his argument, not from the law, nor from nature, nor from philosophy, but from that high and divine nature which God has implanted in His people! Love each other with a pure heart fervently, for you have been born-again, not with corruptible seed, but with incorruptible. I might compare Peter to some judicious tutor of the princes of the blood, who labors to beget and foster a kingly spirit in the king’s sons. From their position and descent, he brings argument for a dignified behavior— “Do not act foolishly; it would be unseemly in a king. Speak not so, vulgar language would be unbecoming to a prince. Indulge not in these vanities; such I be degrading to the illustrious of the earth.” So looking upon God’s people as being heirs of glory, princes of the blood royal, descendants of the King of kings, earth’s true and only real aristocracy—Peter says

to them, “See that you love one another, because of your noble birth, being born of incorruptible seed; because of your pedigree, being descended from God, the Creator of all things; and because of your immortal destiny, for you shall never pass away, though the glory of flesh shall fade, and even its very existence shall cease.”

I think it would be well, my brothers and sisters, if in a spirit of humility, you and I recognized the free dignity of our regenerated nature, and lived up to it. Oh, what is a Christian? If you compare him with a king, he adds priestly sanctity to royal dignity! The king's royalty often lies only in his crown, but with a Christian, it is infused into his very nature! Compare him with a senator, with a mighty warrior, or a master of wisdom, and he far excels them all. He is of another race than those who are only born of woman. He is as much above his fellows through his new birth, as man is above the beast that perishes. As humanity towers in dignity high above the groveling brute, so does the regenerate man overtop the best of human once-born mortals! Surely he ought to bear himself, and act as one who is not of the multitude—one who has been chosen out of the world, distinguished by sovereign grace, written among “the peculiar people”—and who therefore cannot grovel as others grovel, nor think as others think. Let the dignity of your nature and the brightness of your prospects, O believers in Christ, make you cleave to holiness, and hate the very appearance of evil!

In the text there are three points which I think will repay our very serious attention. The apostle evidently speaks of two lives—the one, the life which is natural, born, matured, and perfected only by the flesh; the other, the life which is *spiritual*—born of the Spirit, in antagonism with the flesh, surviving it, and triumphantly rising to celestial glory. Now, in speaking of these two lives, the apostle brings out, first of all, *a*

comparison and a contrast between the two births—for each life has its own birth. Then, he brings out *a contrast between the manifest existence of the two lives*; and then lastly, *between the glory of the two lives*—for each life has its glory—but the glory of the spiritual life, far excels the glory of the natural!

I. First then, the apostle Peter draws A COMPARISON AND CONTRAST BETWEEN THE TWO BIRTHS WHICH ARE THE DOORWAYS OF THE TWO LIVES.

First, we have said that every life is prefaced by birth. It is so naturally—we are born. It is so spiritually—we are *born-again*. Except a man is born, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. Except a man be *born-again*, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. Birth is the lowly gateway by which we enter into life, and the lofty portal by which we are admitted into the kingdom of heaven.

Now, there is a comparison between the two births; in both there is a *solemn mystery*. I have read, I have even heard sermons, in which the minister seemed to me rather to play the part of a physician than of a divine, exposing and explaining the mysteries of our natural birth, across which both God in nature, and the good man in delicacy, must always throw a veil. It is a hallowed thing to be born, as surely as it is a solemnity to die! Birthdays and death days are days of awe. Birth is very frequently used in Scripture as one of the most graphic pictures of solemn mystery. Into this, no man may idly pry, and Science herself, when she has dared to look within the veil, has turned back awestricken, from those “lower parts of the earth” in which David declares us to be “curiously worked.” Greater still is the mystery of the *new birth*. That we are born-again we know, but how, we cannot tell! How the Spirit of God operates upon the mind, how it is that He renews the faculties, and imparts fresh desires by which those faculties shall be guided, how it is that He enlightens the understanding, subdues the will, purifies

the intellect, reverses the desire, lifts up the hope, and puts the fear in its right channel, we cannot tell; we must leave this among the secret things which belong to God. The Holy Spirit works, but the manner of His operation is not to be comprehended! “The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound thereof, but you cannot tell from where it comes, nor where it goes; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” Oh, my hearers, have you *felt* this mystery? Explain it, you cannot, nor can I, nor ought we to attempt an explanation— for where God is silent, it is perhaps profanity, and certainly impertinence, for us to speak! The two births, then, are alike in their solemn mystery.

But then, we know this much of our natural birth that in birth there is a *life created*. Yonder infant is beginning his being—another creature has lifted up its feeble cry to heaven—another mortal has come to tread this theater of action, to breathe, to live, to die. And so in the new birth there is an absolute creation— we are made new creatures in Christ Jesus—there is another spirit born to pray, to believe in Christ, to love Him here, and to rejoice in Him hereafter! As no one doubts but that birth is the manifestation of a creation, so let no one doubt, but that regeneration is the manifestation of a creation of God, as divine, as much beyond the power of man, as the creation of the human mind itself! But, we know also, that in birth there is not only a life created, but a *life communicated*. Each child has its parent. The very flowers trace themselves back to a parental seed. We spring, not from our own loins, we are not self-created; there is a life communicated. We have links between the son and the father, and back till we come to father Adam. So in regeneration there is a life, not merely created, but communicated, even the very life of God, who has begotten us again unto a lively hope! As truly as the father lives in the child, so truly does the very life and nature of God live in every child

born heir of heaven! We are as certainly partakers of the divine nature by the new birth as we were partakers of the human nature by the old birth—so far the comparison holds good.

Equally certain is it, that in the natural and in the spiritual birth there is *life entailed*. There are certain propensities which we inherit from which this side of the grave we shall not be free. Our temperament, brave or frivolous, our passions, slow or hasty, our propensities, sensual or aspiring, our faculties, contracted or expansive, are to a great measure an entailed inheritance, as much linked to our future portion, as are wings to an eagle, or a shell to a snail. No doubt, much of our history is born within us, and the infant has within himself the germ of his future actions. If I may so speak, there are those qualities that composition and disposition of nature which will naturally, if circumstances assist, work out in full development certain results. So is it with us when we are born-again; a heavenly nature is entailed upon us. We cannot but be holy; the new nature cannot but serve God; it must—it will, pant to be nearer to Christ, and more like He. It has aspirations which time cannot satisfy, desires which earth cannot surfeit, longings which heaven alone can gratify. There is a life entailed upon us in the moment when we pass from death unto life in the solemn mystery of *regeneration*!

In the old birth, and in the new birth also, *a life* is also brought forth which is *complete in all its parts* and only needs to be developed. Yon infant in the cradle shall never have another limb, or another eye. Its limb hardens, it grows, it gathers strength; its brain also enlarges its sphere, but the faculties are there already—they are not implanted afterward. Verily, so is it in the new-born child of God. Faith, love, hope, and every grace are there the moment he believes in Christ. They grow, 'tis true, but they were all there in the instant of regeneration! The babe in grace, who is just now born to God, has every part

of the spiritual man—it only needs to grow, till he becomes a perfect man in Christ Jesus!

Thus far, you perceive that the two births have a very close resemblance to one another. I pray now, that I have introduced the subject, do not turn from it till you have thought of the reality of the new birth, as you must of the reality of the first. You were not here if you had not been born—you shall never be in heaven unless you are born-again! You had not been able today to hear, or think, or see if you had not been born. You are not today able to pray or to believe in Christ, unless you are born-again. The enjoyments of this world you could never have known, if it had not been for birth; the sacred delight of God you do not know today, and you never shall know, unless you are born-again. Do not look upon regeneration as though it were a fancy or a fiction! I assure you, my hearers, it is as real as is the natural birth; for spiritual is not the same as fanciful, but the spiritual is as real as even nature itself. To be born-again is as much a matter of fact to be realized, to be discerned, and to be discovered, as to be born for the first time into this vale of tears.

But now comes *the contrast*—“being born not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible.” Herein lies the contrast between the two. That child, who has just experienced the first birth, has been made partaker of *corruptible seed*. The depravity of his parent lies sleeping within him. Could he speak, he might say so. David did—“Behold, I was born in sin and shaped in iniquity.” He receives the evil virus which was first infused into us by the fall. Not so, however, is it when we are born-again! No sin is then sown within us. This sin of the old flesh remains, but there is no sin in the newborn nature—it cannot sin because it is born of God Himself! It is as impossible for that new nature to sin as for the Deity itself to be defiled. It is a part of the divine nature—a spark struck off from the central orb

of light and life, and dead or dark it cannot be—because it would be contrary to its nature to be either the one or the other. Oh, what a difference! In the first birth—born to sin, in the next—born to holiness; in the first—partakers of corruption, in the next—heirs of incorruption; in the first—depravity, in the second—perfection. What broader contrast could there be? What should make us more thoroughly long for this new birth, than the glorious fact that we are by its means consciously lifted up from the ruins of the fall, and made perfect in Christ Jesus?

In the birth of the flesh too, what *dread uncertainties* attend it! What shall become of yonder child? It may live to curse the day in which it was born, as did the poor troubled patriarch of old. What sorrow may drive its plowshares along its yet unwrinkled brow? Ah, child, you shall be gray-headed one day, but before that comes, you shall have felt a thousand storms beating about your heart and head! Little do you know your destiny, but assuredly, you shall be of few days, and full of trouble. Not so in the regeneration— we shall never rue the day in which we are born-again—NEVER! We shall never look back upon that day with sorrow, but always with ecstasy and delight, for we are ushered then—not into the hovel of humanity—but into the palace of Deity! We are not then, born into a valley of tears, but into an inheritance in the Canaan of God!

That child, too, so fondly the object of its mother's love, may one day vex or break its parent's heart. Are not children doubtful mercies? Bring they not with them sad forebodings of what they yet may be? Alas for the pretty prattlers who have grown up to be convicted criminals! But blessed be God, they who are sons of God shall never break their Father's heart. Their new nature shall be worthy of Him who gave it existence. They shall live to honor Him, they shall die to be perfectly like He, and shall rise to glorify Him forever! We have sometimes

said that God has a very naughty family—but surely the naughtiness is in the old Adam nature—and not in Jehovah's gracious work! There is no naughtiness in the new creature. In that new creature there is no taint of sin. God's child as descended from His loins, can never sin. The new nature which God has put into it does never wander—death never transgresses—it were not the new nature if it did. It were not God's offspring, if it sins—for that which comes of God is like He, holy, pure and undefiled, separate from sin. In this indeed lies a strange difference. We know not to what that first nature tends—who can tell what bitterness it shall bring forth? But, we know where the new nature tends—for it ripens towards the perfect image of Him who created us in Christ Jesus.

Perhaps without my endeavoring to enlarge further, you could yourselves muse upon this theme. It remains but for me upon this first head, to return with earnestness to that point upon which I fear the greatest difficulty lies—the realization of this birth—for we repeat it, we are speaking of a fact and not a dream, a reality and not a metaphor.

Some tell you that the child is regenerated when the drops fall from priestly fingers. My brothers and sisters, a more fond and foul delusion was never perpetrated upon earth! Rome itself did never discourse upon a wilder error than this! Dream not of it! O, think not that it is so! “Except a man be born-again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” The Lord Himself addresses this sentence, not to an infant, but to a full-grown man. Nicodemus was one who was circumcised according to the Jewish law, but who yet, though he had received the seal of that covenant, needed as a man to be born-again. We all without exception must know this change! Your life may have been moral, but it will not suffice. The most moralized human nature can never attain to the *divine* nature. You may cleanse and purge the fruit of the first birth, but still, the inevitable

decree demands the second birth for all. If from your youth up, you have been so trained that you have scarcely known the vices of the people—so tended, hedged in—and kept from contamination with sin, that you have not known temptation—yet you must be born-again! And this birth, I repeat it, must be as much a fact, must be as true, as real, and as *sure*, as was that first birth in which you were ushered into this world. What do you know of this, my hearer? What do you know of this? It is a thing you cannot perform for yourself. You cannot regenerate yourself any more than you could cause yourself to be born! It is a matter out of the range of human power—it is supernatural, it is divine. Have you partaken of it? Do not merely look back to some hour in which you felt mysterious feelings; no, but judge by the *fruits*. Have your fears and hopes changed places? Do you love the things you once hated, and hate the things you once loved? Are old things passed away? Have all things become new? Christian brothers and sisters, I put the query to you, as well as to the rest! It is so easy to be deceived here. We shall find it no trifle to be born-again. It is a solemn, it is a momentous matter. Let us not take it for granted because we have given up drunkenness, that we are therefore converted. Let us not presume because we do not swear, because now we attend a place of worship, that we are born-again. There is more needed than this! Do not think you are saved because you have some good feelings, some good thoughts. There is more required than this—you must be *born-again*. And oh, Christian parents, train up your children in the fear of God, but do not be content with your training—they must be born-again. And Christian husbands, and Christian wives—be not satisfied with merely praying that your partner's characters may become moral and honest—ask that something may be done for them which they cannot do for themselves! And you philanthropists who think that building new cottages, using fresh plans for

drainage, teaching the poor economy, will be the means of saving the world, I pray you go further than such schemes as these! You must change the *heart*. It is but little use, to alter the outward till you have renewed the inward! It is not the bark of the tree that is wrong, as much as the sap. It is not the skin—it is the blood—no, deeper than the blood—the very essence of the nature must be altered! The man must be as much made anew, as if he never had an existence. No, a greater miracle than this—these must be two miracles combined—the old things must pass away, and new things must be created by the Holy Spirit! I tremble while I speak upon this theme, lest I, your minister, should know in theory, but not in experience a mystery as sublime as this! What shall we do, but together, offer a prayer like this—“O God, if we are not regenerate, let us know the worst of our state! And if we are, let us never cease to plead and pray for others till they too, shall be renewed by the Holy Spirit.” That which is born of the flesh is flesh. Its best endeavors go no higher than flesh, and the flesh cannot inherit the kingdom of God! That which is born of the Spirit, alone, is Spirit, and only the Spirit can enter into spiritual things, and inherit the spiritual portion which God has provided for His people. I have thus passed through the somewhat delicate and extremely difficult task of bringing out the apostle's meaning—the comparison between the two births—which are the doorsteps of the two lives.

II. I now come to the second point—THE MANIFEST DIFFERENCE OF THE TWO LIVES RESULTING FROM THE TWO BIRTHS.

Brothers and sisters, look around you. To what shall we compare this immense assembly? As I look upon the many colors, and the varied faces, even if it were not in the text, I am certain that a meadow thickly sprinkled with flowers would rise up before my imagination. Look at the mass of people gathered

together, and does it not remind you of the field in its full summer glory when the king-cups, daisies, clovers, and grass blooms are sunning themselves in countless varieties of beauty? Yes, but not only in the poet's eye is there a resemblance—but in the mind of God—and in the experience of man. "All flesh is grass." All that is born of the first birth, if we compare it to grass in poetry, may be compared to it also in fact—from the frailty and shortness of its existence. We passed the meadows but a month ago, and they were moved in verdant billows by the breeze like waves of ocean when they are softly stirred with the evening gale. We looked upon the whole scene, and it was exceedingly fair. We passed it yesterday, and the mower's scythe had cut asunder beauty from its roots, and there it lay in heaps ready to be gathered when fully dry. The grass is cut down so soon—but if it stood, it would wither, and handfuls of dust would take the place of the green and colored leaves—for does not the grass wither, and the flowers thereof fall away? Such is mortal life. We are not living, brothers and sisters—we are dying! We begin to breathe, and we make the number of our breaths less! Our pulse is "beating funeral marches to the tomb." The sand runs down from the upper bulb of the glass, and it is emptying fast. Death is written upon every brow. Man, know that you are mortal, for you all are born of woman! Your first birth gave you life and death together. You do only breathe awhile to keep you from the jaws of the grave—when that breath is spent—into the dust of death you fall, then and there! Everything, especially during the last few weeks, has taught us the frailty of human life. The senator who guided the affairs of nations, and beheld the rise of a free kingdom, lived not to see it fully organized, but expired with many weighty secrets unspoken. The judge who has sentenced many, receives his own sentence at the last. From this earth, since last we met together, master-minds have been taken away, and even the

monarch on his throne has acknowledged the monarchy of Death. How many of the masses, too, have fallen and have been carried to their long home! There have been funerals, some of them funerals of honored men who perished doing their Master's will in saving human life, and alas, there have been unhonored burials of others who did the will of Satan, and have inherited the flame. There have been deaths abundant on the right hand, and on the left, and well have Peter's words been proved—"All flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withers, and the flower thereof falls away."

Now, brethren, let us look at the other side of the question. The second birth gave us a nature, too— will that also die? Is it like grass, and its glory like the flower of the field? No, most certainly not! The first nature dies because the seed was corruptible. But, the second nature was not created by corruptible seed—but with incorruptible—the word of God into which God has infused His own life—so that it quickens us by the Spirit. That incorruptible word produces an incorruptible life! The child of God in his new nature never dies; he can never see death. Christ, who is in him, is the Immortality and the life. "He who lives and believes in Christ shall never die." And yet again—"Though he were dead, yet shall he live." When we are born-again, we receive a nature which is indestructible by accident, which is not to be consumed by fire, drowned by water, weakened by old age, or smitten down by blast of pestilence; a nature invulnerable to poison; a nature which shall not be destroyed by the sword; a nature which can never die, till the God who gave it should Himself expire, and Deity die out! Think of this, my brethren, and surely you will find reason to rejoice! But perhaps, you ask me, why it is the new nature can never die? I am sure the text teaches it never can. "But not of corruptible seed, but of

incorruptible, even of the word of God which lives and abides forever.” If that does not teach that the *spiritual nature* which is given us by the new birth never dies, it does not teach anything at all! And if it does teach that, where goes Arminian doctrine of falling from grace? Where goes your Arminian fears of perishing after all? But, let me show you why it is that this nature never dies. First, *from the fact of its nature*; it is in itself incorruptible! Every like produces its like. Man, dying man, produces dying man; God, eternal God, produces everlasting nature when He begets again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead. “As is the earthy, such are they also who are earthy.” The earthy dies, we who are earthy die, too. “As is the heavenly, such are they also who are heavenly.” The heavenly never dies, and if we are born as the heavenly, the heavenly nature dies neither. “The first Adam was made a living soul.” We are made living souls, too, but that soul at last is separated from the body. “The second Adam is made a quickening spirit,” and that spirit is not only alive, but quickening! Do you not perceive it?—the first was a quickened *soul*—quickened, receiving life for a season; the second is a quickening spirit, giving out life, rather than receiving it; like that angel whom some poet pictures, who perpetually shot forth sparklers of fire, having within himself an undying flame, the fountain of perpetual floods of light and heat. So is it with the new nature within us; it is not merely a quickened thing which may die; but, a quickening thing which cannot die, being made like unto Christ the quickening Spirit.

But then, more than this, the new nature cannot die because *the Holy Spirit perpetually supplies it with life*. “He gives more grace”—grace upon grace. You know the apostle puts it thus—“If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by *His life*.” Is not the Holy Spirit the divine agent by

whom the life of Christ is infused into us? Now, the life floods which the Holy Spirit sends into us, co-work with the immortality of the new-born Spirit, and so doubly preserve the eternity of our bliss! But then, again, *we are in vital union with Christ*, and to suppose that the new nature could die out, were to imagine that a member of Christ would die, that a finger, a hand, an arm, could rot from the Person of Jesus—that He could be maimed and divided! Does not the apostle say, “Is Christ divided?” And was it not written, “Not a bone of Him shall be broken”? And how is this true if we were broken from Him, or rolled from His body? My brothers and sisters, we receive the divine sap through Christ, the stem. That divine sap keeps us alive, but more—the very fact that we are joined to Christ preserves our life, “Because I live, you shall live also.” The new life cannot die, *because God is pledged to keep it alive*. “I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.” “My Father which gave them to Me is greater than all, and none shall pluck them out of My Father’s hand.” And yet again—“The water which I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life.” And yet again—“He who believes in Me shall never hunger, and never thirst.” And so might we repeat multitudes of passages where the divine promise engages omnipotence and divine wisdom to preserve the new life! So then, let us gather these all up in one. As a man born of the flesh, I shall die; as a new man born of the Spirit, I shall never die! You, O flesh, the offspring of flesh—you shall see corruption. You, O quickened Spirit, new-created Spirit, offspring of the Lord—you shall never see corruption! With our glorious covenant Head, we may exclaim, “You will not leave My soul in hell, nor will You suffer Your Holy One to see corruption.” I shall die, yet never die! My life shall flee, yet never flee! I shall pass away, and yet abide! I shall be carried to

the tomb, and yet, soaring upward, the tomb can never contain the quickened Spirit! Oh, Children of God, I know not any subject that ought more thoroughly to lift you out of yourselves than this! Now let the divine nature live in you; come, put down the animal for a moment, put down the mere mental faculty; let the living spark blaze up. Come, let the divine element, the newborn nature that God has given to you—let that now speak—and let its voice be praise! Let it look up and let it breathe its own atmosphere, the heaven of God, in which it shall shortly rejoice! O God, our Father, help us to walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, seeing that we have by Your own self been quickened to an immortal life!

III. I now come to the last, and perhaps the most interesting point of all. **THE GLORY OF THE TWO NATURES IS CONTRASTED.** Every nature has its glory. Brothers and sisters, look at the field again. There is not only the grass, but there is the flower which is the glory of the field. Sometimes many colored hues begem the pastures with beauty. Now, the painted flower is the glory of the verdant field. It comes up later than the grass, and it dies sooner, for the grass is up a long while before the flower blooms, and when the flower is dead, the stalk of the grass still retains vitality. It is precisely so with us. Our nature has its glory, but that glory does not arrive for years. The babe has not yet the glory of full manhood, and when that glory does come, it dies before our nature dies, for “They who look out of the windows are darkened, the grinders cease because they are few.” The man loses his glory, and becomes a tottering imbecile before life becomes extinct. The flower comes up last and dies first; our glory comes last and dies first, too. O flesh! O flesh! What contempt is passed upon you! Your very existence is frail and feeble, but your glory more frail and feeble still! It grows but late, and then it dies—alas how soon! Give me your attention for a moment while I tell you briefly.

In some, the glory of the flesh is BEAUTY. Their face is fair to look upon, and as the handiwork of the Great Worker, it should be admired. When a person becomes vain of it, beauty becomes shame; but to have well-proportioned features is, doubtless, no mean endowment. There is a glory in the beauty of the flesh, but how late it is developed, and how soon it fades! How soon do the cheeks become hollow! How frequently does the complexion grow sallow, and the bright eyes are dimmed, and the comely visage is marred! A part, too, of the glory of the flesh is *physical strength*. To be a strong man, to have the bones well set, and the muscles well braced—to have good muscular vigor is no small thing. Many men take delight in the legs of a man, and in the strength of his arms. Well, as God made him, he is a wonderful creature, and it would be wrong for us not to admire the masterpiece of God. But, how late does muscular strength arrive! There are the days of infancy, and there are the days of youth when as yet the strong man is but feeble. And then, when he has had his little hey-day of strength, how does the stalwart frame begin to rock and reel! And the rotting teeth, and the whitened hair show that death has begun to claim the clay, and will soon take possession of it for himself. “The glory thereof falls away.”

To others, the glory of the flesh lies rather *in the mind*. They have eloquence; they can so speak, as to enchant the ears of the multitude; the bees of eloquence have made their hives between the lips of the orator, and honey distils with every word! Yes, but, how late is this in coming! How many years before the child speaks articulately, and before the young man is able to deliver himself with courage! And then, how soon it goes!—till, mumbling from between his toothless jaws, the poor man would speak the words of wisdom, but the lips of age deny him utterance. Or, let the glory be *wisdom*. There is a man whose glory is his masterly power over others; he can

foresee and look further than other men, he can match craft by craft—he is so wise that his fellows put confidence in him. This is the glory of the flesh. How late is it in coming!—from the whining child, what a distance up to the wise man! And then, how soon it is gone! How often, while yet the man himself in his flesh is in vigor, has the mind strewn symptoms of decay! Well, take what you will to be the glory of the flesh, I will still pronounce over it, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” If the flesh is frail, the glory of the flesh is frailer still! If the grass withers, certainly the flower of the grass withers before it! But, is this true of the new nature? Brethren, is this true of that which was implanted at the second birth? I have just shown you, I think, that the existence of the new nature is eternal—because it was not born of corruptible seed—but of incorruptible. I have tried to show that it can never perish, and can never die. But, your unbelief suggests, “Perhaps its glory may.” No, its glory never can. And what is the glory of the new-born nature? Why, its glory, first of all, is *beauty*. But what is its beauty? It is to be like the Lord Jesus! We are, when we shall see Him as He is, to be like He! And *that* beauty shall never fade; eternity itself shall not hollow the cheeks of this seraphic comeliness, nor dim the brilliant eyes of this celestial radiance. We shall be like Christ, but the likeness shall never be marred by time, nor consumed by decay! I said just now that the glory of the flesh consisted sometimes in its strength—so does the glory of the Spirit consist in its vigor—but then, it is a force that never shall be expended! The strength of the new-born nature is the Holy Spirit Himself, and while Deity remains omnipotent, our new nature shall go on increasing in vigor, till we come first to the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus, and next come to be glorified men standing before His throne! The flower of the new nature you cannot see much of yet—you see through a glass darkly. That flower of glory consists perhaps, too, in

eloquence. “Eloquence,” you ask, “how can that be?” I said the glory of the old nature might be eloquence, so with the new—but this is the eloquence—“Abba Father.” This is an eloquence you can use now; it is one which when you cannot speak a word which might move an audience, shall still remain upon your tongue to move the courts of heaven! You shall be able to say, “Abba Father,” in the very pangs of death, and waking from your beds of dust and silent clay, more eloquent still you shall cry, “Hallelujah!” You shall join the eternal chorus, swell the divine symphony of cherubim and seraphim and through eternity your glory shall never pass away.

And then, if wisdom is glory, your wisdom—the wisdom which you inherit in the new nature, which is none other than Christ's, who is made of God unto us—your wisdom shall never fade, in fact it shall grow, for there you shall know even as you are known. While here you see through a glass darkly, there you shall see face to face. You sip the brook today; you shall bathe in the ocean tomorrow! You see afar off now, you shall lie in the arms of wisdom, by-and-by; for the glory of the Spirit never dies, but throughout eternity expanding, enlarging, blazing, glorifying itself through God, it shall go on never, never to fail! Brothers and sisters, whatever it may be which you are expecting as the glory of your new nature, you have not yet an idea of what it will be! “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, the things which God has prepared for them who love Him.” But though He has revealed them unto us by His Spirit, yet, I fear we have not fully learned them. However, we will say of this glory, whatever it may be, it is *incorruptible, undefiled*, and it *fades not* away. The only question we have to ask, and with that we finish, is—are we born-again? Brothers and sisters, it is impossible for you to possess the existence of the new life without the new birth, and the glory of the new birth you cannot know without the new heart! I ask—*are you born-again?*

Do not stand up and say, “I am a Churchman; I was baptized and confirmed.” That you may be, and yet not be born-again! Do not say, “I am a Baptist; I have professed my faith and was immersed.” That you may be, and not be born-again! Do not say, “I am of Christian parents.” That you may be, and yet be an heir of wrath, even as others! Are you born-again? May God the Holy Spirit reveal Christ to you, and when you come to see Christ with the tearful eyes of a penitential faith—then you will know, by God’s grace, that you are born-again, and that you have passed from death unto life. “He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; he who believes not shall be damned.” God help you to believe!

399 A PEAL OF BELLS – ZECH. 14:20

A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Morning, July 7th, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses,
HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD.” — Zechariah 14:20

THERE ARE many days *already past* which we might well have wished to see. Who would not have rejoiced to have beheld the day when God smote Rahab and broke the dragon in the deep waters, when Miriam took the timbrel and went forth with the daughters of Israel, saying, “Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea”? Who might not have wished to have witnessed the glorious victories of the judges when they put to rout the oppressors of Israel, or that day when David returned from the slaughter of Goliath, or that auspicious morn when Solomon’s temple, glittering in unrivalled magnificence, was dedicated by a vast concourse of people with generous sacrifices to the worship of the true God? Many days there were in the chronicles of the Jewish Church which are never to be forgotten: Earth’s red-letter days when God made bare His arm, and showed forth His might. Days there were, too, in Christ’s history which it was a high privilege to see. The day of His birth—would that we had been among the shepherds on the plain when they heard the angels sing, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” Or the day

of His death, when He cried, “It is finished,” and yielded up the ghost. Or, better still, the day of His resurrection when He routed all our foes by rising again for our justification; or the day of His ascension when He led captivity captive, and ascended up on high! Or even that day of Pentecost when the Spirit of God fell on the disciples, and when they, preaching with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance, multitudes were added to the Church from those who were ordained unto eternal life! Those days are gone; we look back upon them with faith, and as Abraham rejoiced in prospect, so would we do in retrospect. But there are days *yet to come* for whose advent we may well be eager! There is the day when Ephraim shall not envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim—for all the Church of Christ shall be one in spirit. There is the day when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. There is the day, too, when Israel shall be restored to its own land—when its country shall be called no more desolate, but Beulah; and no more forsaken, but Hephzibah shall its name be—for the Lord delights in it. There is specially the day of the Second Advent—that day of days for which I think all other days that went before were made, that day which shall be the summing up, the total of all ages—for the fullness of time shall come—and Christ, in the fullness of His glory, shall reign among the sons of men. I think I may, with your permission, add to the days which we might desire to see that which is spoken of in the text—“In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD.” What connection there may be between that day and others which I have mentioned is not my purpose this morning; I would that this were to us personally the day when it should be fulfilled in us as individuals, and may the Lord hasten the happy day when universally throughout the Church this text has been fulfilled,

and upon the bells of the horses there shall be, “HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD!”

The text, as you perceive, deals with horses which were unclean under the Jewish law; yet, in the day spoken of in the text, the horses themselves shall be purged from commonness or uncleanness, and their harness shall be dedicated to God as certainly as the vestments of the High Priest himself! It will be a happy day indeed when the men who deal with horses, too often a race anything but honest and upbeat, shall exhibit in their common transactions a consecration to God, so that on the horses' ornaments shall be written, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD. The original Hebrew word translated “bells” is a very singular one, because nobody knows precisely what it means. The fact is the Hebrews knew so little of horses from being prohibited from their use, that they had not a very large vocabulary to describe the harness and other equipments of the horse. The word is translated by some critics, “bells,” by others, “bits,” by some, “frontlets,” and others, “collars,” by some, and by Calvin, especially, “blinkers,” and Calvin also hints that the word may mean “stables.” The words must then mean—“The furniture of the horses shall be, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD.” And there is no doubt a comparison between the horses and the High Priest—if it is the frontlet—just as the High Priest had upon his brow the Hebrew letters in gold, “Holiness unto the Lord,” so on the frontlet of the horses shall be HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD. And as the High Priest wore bells about his garments, so the horses are decorated with their silver bells, and there shall be on the bells, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD. And if it signifies any other kind of vestment, even as on the very ornaments of the Priest, on his ephod and breastplate holiness was written, so in every article that shall be by the horse, shall Holiness to God be most clearly manifest, yes, even the stables, unconsecrated as one would

suppose they must always remain, shall be consecrated to God. The most common buildings, set apart to meanest uses, being frequented by worshippers of the Lord shall become temples of Him who dwells in humble and contrite hearts.

The simple meaning of the text is just this—that the day shall come when in common life Holiness shall be the guiding star—when the ordinary actions of human existence shall be as much the worship of God as the sacrifice on the altar or the mission of the high priest when he went within the veil. Everything which was most despised—the horses, the places that seemed the least likely to be consecrated—the stables—and those things which seemed the least holy, even the horses’ harness—all shall be so thoroughly used in obedience to God’s will, that everywhere there shall be, “Holiness unto Jehovah.” Common things, then, in the day spoken of by Zechariah, are to be dedicated to God, and used in His service.

I shall work out this great thought in a somewhat novel manner. First, let us *bear the horses’ bells*. Secondly, let us *commend their music*. And then, thirdly, let us *go home and tune our bells*, that they may be in harmony with this sacred chime—“HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD.”

I. First of all, let us **HEAR THESE HORSES BELLS**, which according to the text are to be tuned to the heavenly note of “HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD.”

First, let us mark the trappings of the steed as he goes forth *to war*. He chomps his bit and is eager for the fray; his snorts are terrible, his neck is clothed with lightning, and he cries in the midst of the battle, “Aha! Aha! Aha!” War is to our minds the most difficult thing to sanctify to God. The genius of the Christian religion is altogether contrary to everything like strife of any kind—much more to the deadly clash of arms. Yet it may be possible that occasions may arise in which war itself might become hallowed; and certainly we must not deny that

many of those who have to deal with war are at this day consecrated men, like Cornelius' devout soldier, and as truly servants of Christ in the army as though they were civilians. Now I say again, I am no apologist for war—from my soul I loathe it—and I do not understand the position of a Christian as a warrior, but still, I greatly rejoice that there are to be found at this present day in the ranks many of those who fear God, and adorn the doctrine of God their Savior. I may almost venture to say that the war against the tyrant, Charles I, was a consecrated fight. The people of God had been hunted like partridges upon the mountains in the reigns of Elizabeth and James, and Charles. At last their lion-like spirits turned at bay, and their enemies were driven back before their gallant fury. Cromwell, the Christian hero, mounted his charger and bade his saintly warriors, with the sword in one hand, and the Bible in the other, fight for England's liberty! I think in those valiant charges when they shouted their battle cry—"The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge"—there was, as if ever there was, upon the frontlets of the horses, their collars and their bits, "HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD." May such a war never rise again—but honor to the ashes of the consecrated brave!

If I could believe that there were in America a sincere desire on the part of the Northerners to set free every slave, I would say, "God speed their swords, and bless their arms." If I could believe that the chain would be broken, and that it was their intent to do it—if I did not fear that they will yet compromise, and make terms with the bloodhound's master, and let him still hold his blood-stained property in the souls and bodies of men—I would say that that might be, if war ever could be, a consecrated war, and upon the bits of the horses would be "HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD." But since that is a difficult point to speak of, since, as I have said before, the

very genius and spirit of Christianity go against war altogether, though I must believe there have been occasions in which the bells of war-horses have been HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD, yet I would rather speak of individuals. If there ever lived a man who, disinterested in spirit and without any desire of aggrandizement or selfish honor, held in his hand a consecrated sword, it is Garibaldi. I think of him, for his speeches make me believe it, not only as a hero but as a Christian, as the scourge of Popery, and the enemy of all despotism. It might be said that his wargarments are Holiness to the Lord. The same might we say of Hedley Vicars, whose history, so wellwritten, you have all so often read, and of Havelock, our own true Havelock, who for the deliverance of our own wives and sisters, in silence rushed upon his prey, and delivered women and children out of the fierce jaws of the blood-loving tiger. These men preached Christ wherever they went! I love not their trade, but I love them. I would wish them to put up their swords into their scabbards, but when they did draw them, I am sure they did it in the full conviction that they were doing their duty—and though even that may not justify the error—yet it must prevent any of us from condemning them. I believe that they did it as in the sight of God, and what they did was to them Holiness unto the Lord. Oh, may there never be war again! May peace reign! But if there must be wars, may they all be just ones! If there must be fighting, may it always be for the freedom of the slave, and the deliverance of the helpless! And in all this may Jehovah, even in the battle, in the garments rolled in blood, and in the fire and vapor of smoke, still be acknowledged, and across the field of fire may there be written, “HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD!”

We turn aside awhile, for other horses are coming, and their bells are ringing forth Holiness unto the Lord. Horses are used in state. In splendor, kings, princes, and judges of the land

ride through the crowd. The text says, “Upon the bells of the horses shall be, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD.” Drawn by noble steeds, glittering with rich caparisons, an exalted personage passes through the thronging mass; it is a sovereign and oh, when the sovereign of a nation has a heart which bows before God, and has a hope of an immortal and an imperishable crown, then regal state is sanctified, and the bells upon the horses are HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD! When a sir Matthew Hale rode in the judge’s chariot to distribute justice, surely the state which attended the Lord Chief Justice of the land was Holiness to God; and when a sir Thomas Abney even on the night of the Lord Mayor’s banquet retired awhile, that he might have prayer with his family and his servants, surely then the too gaudy show of civic pomp was Holiness unto the Lord! And I think when Wilberforce went to the House of Commons, however he might ride, the bit of his horse was Holiness to the Lord. Since we cannot dispense with the ceremonial honor which surrounds governors, we must consecrate it; as long as kingdoms remain, it must be the prayer of Christians that the state may be a holy state, and that its officers and governors may be devout and upright men. Little do we know, my brothers and sisters, what mischief would soon be done in the high places of the land if we had back again upon the throne a George the Fourth—if once again our eminent men were found indulging in the lowest pastimes of the very scum of this city; if again unblushing bribery defiled the judgment seat; if a bloody Jeffreys could browbeat the saints of God once more—then we should consider it a matter of importance to pray to God for kings and those in authority. Had we not, my brethren, better think it a matter of importance now, and pray daily to God that He would cause the state to be more and more consecrated to Him, so that the very bells upon

the horses, as they walk in solemn pomp, may be HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD?

But I hear the tinkling of other bells. The day is to come when not only war and the states shall be consecrated to Christ, but even pleasure and recreation shall become Holiness to the Lord. When you are traveling in Alpine regions, you will be amused by the ringing of the little bells upon the horses. You are there for rest, to refresh the body—but let that rest be taken in the spirit of holiness! I fear that many leave their religion behind them when they go to the seaside or to continental countries. It ought not to be so—in our pleasures as well as in everything else—on the very bells of the horses there should be, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD. A Christian needs recreation as well as any other man; the bow must be unstrung, for the soul always bent to work shall soon lose the energy to labor. There must be times for breathing the fresh country air, and looking upon the meadows and the fields. I wish such days came more often to the poor toiling population of this huge labyrinth of bricks! Would that you could more often see the laughing face of the verdant earth, and the smokeless heavens! But mark this—let us as Christians see to it that we carry the spirit of this text with us wherever we go—that the bells of the horses be HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD, and our very recreations should be done as sacredly, and as much in the sight of God as our sacraments and our solemn feast days. Does recreation mean sin? Then, indeed, have nothing to do with it! Does pleasure mean iniquity? Deny, deny yourselves! But there are pleasures which mean no such thing! As you traverse alpine regions, let your thoughts stand on the mountaintops and talk with God. Or if you walk the fair lanes of England, let the cool retreat become an oratory for your soul. Why everything that your eyes look upon, from the king-cup in the meadow to the cedar upon the mountain, may make you praise God! And

when it is so, then the bells upon the horses are HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD. If in seeking rest you are really desiring to get strength, that you may spend it in His service, if you take rest not for your pleasure's sake, but to quicken your muscles once more, and get your soul into tune so you may with greater vigor serve Him in days to come—then, again, the bells of the horses are HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD. And if you avail yourself of any opportunities which your recreation throws in your way to speak a kind word, and a word for Christ to those whom you pass, or with whom you have chance communion in your travels—then, again, the bells of the horses are HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD. It is greatly to be regretted that the mass of our people who go to the seaside, and especially who go to Paris, leave their godliness behind them. One of the ministers of the Church at L'Oratoire told me the manner in which English Christians spend their Sabbaths in Paris is a very serious impediment to the growth of religion in France! Men think that when they are abroad they may leave their habits which they practiced at home behind them. Full often have I known that at the seaside, Christians knowingly and willfully keep the proprietors of the houses where they lodge from places of worship, in order to prepare them sumptuous repasts on the Sabbath, and so they are virtually prevented from hearing the Word of God for six or nine months in the year! There may be some of you who are going out by-and-by, I beg you in your recreation not to leave your religion behind you. You will put on your black coat and put on your tourist's suit—but take your Christian character with you, I beseech you! Why should it be thought of you that your religion is a local thing and that out of the way of society, which is a sort of check upon you, you may be free to sin as others do?

Listen to the bells again. Horses are used for journeying. We must all journey sometimes, and when we do, the bells upon the horses, and the shrill scream of the steam engine should still be—“HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD.” The missionary is crossing the sea. Perhaps at this very hour while we are sitting quietly here, his boat is leaping the billows and springing from wave to wave. I believe that every motion of the paddles is holiness to the Lord, because the ship is carrying forth God’s appointed messenger to proclaim the gospel among the heathen! There are Christian men on board who are not going forth to preach, but to emigrate and settle down. Now, if they intend in emigrating to establish a Church of Christ where they are to live, and to preach the gospel where they may be called to go, every motion of the vessel is Holiness unto the Lord! Perhaps she carries merchants who go abroad to trade and return again—but if they are about to trade as Christians, and then consecrate their substance unto God—that vessel, though she leaves a black trail across the sky in her cloud of smoke, is as accepted as the smoke of sacrifice—as Holiness unto the Lord. Where there is a true heart, the horse that bears it is a consecrated one. Let our goings out be in the Lord’s sight. We are lights—if the light is moved, it should be to illuminate other places. We are salt—if the salt is scattered, it should be that the conserving influence should be felt the more widely. Do not leave home unless you feel that you can take your Master with you; and when you are away from home, always seek to be doing something for your Master—so you may leave a fragrance behind you. How much good might some do who are called to travel continually! There are some few in this Church, for instance, who travel as commercial gentlemen. I know one or two of them who scarcely ever go into a town without preaching the Word there; and I know others of them who, in the commercial room where they meet with some who

despise the religion of Christ, speak boldly for the truth as it is in Jesus! And they are as useful in their daily journeys as any Christian men could be who filled up a place in the Sunday school or officiated as deacons in the Church at home! Let your journeys, then, always be with the ringing of these bells, “**HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD.**”

But horses of old were also used for merchandise, and when the packhorses went in long strings, the front horses always had bells, that the others might be guided in the darkness. I think there is an allusion to that in the text—for such may have been the custom of the Eastern caravans—as indeed it was. The text means, then, that merchandise and our common trade should be Holiness unto the Lord! O sirs, when you take down your shutters in the morning, let it be with a prayer that your business of the day may be as much a sacrifice to God as the business which I may have to transact as the pastor of the Church! And when you stand behind the counter, ask God that in your dealings—though they are common to the eyes of men—there may be an inward spirituality which God shall discover. Thus, there may be Holiness to the Lord. Sometimes when some of you have been stirred up by a sermon, you have come to me, and said, “Mr. Spurgeon, could I go to China? Could I become a missionary? Could I become a minister?” In very many cases, the brothers who offer are exceedingly unfit for any service of the kind—for they have very little gift of expression, very little natural genius, and no adaptation for such a work! And I have constantly and frequently to say, “My dear brother, be consecrated to Christ in your daily calling; do not seek to take a spiritual office, but spiritualize your common office.” Why, the cobbler can consecrate his lap stone while many a minister has desecrated his pulpit! The plowman can put his hand to the plow in as holy a manner as ever did a minister to the sacramental bread! In

dealing with your ribbons and your groceries, in handling your bricks and your jackplanes, you can be as truly priests to God as were those who slew the bullocks, and burned them with the holy fire in the days of yore. This old fact needs to be brought out again! We do not so much need great preachers as good upright *traders*; it is not so much deacons and elders we long for, as it is to have men who are *deacons for Christ* in common life, and are really elders of the Church in their ordinary conversation! Sirs, Christ did not come into the world to take all fishermen from their nets, though He did take some. He did not call all publicans from the receipt of custom, though He did call *one*. He did not come to make every Martha into a Mary, though He did bless a Martha and a Mary, too! He would have you be housewives still. Be sisters of mercy in your own habitations. He would have you be traders, buyers and sellers, workers and toilers still—for the end of Christianity is not to make preachers—but to make *holy men*! The preacher is but the *tool*. He may be, sometimes, but the scaffold of the house. But *you* are God's husbandry; *you* are God's building; *you*, in your common acts, and your common deeds, are they who are to serve God!

That wicked fiction of the Church of Rome—that her *cathedrals* are holy—has made us think that our *houses* are not! Why, my friends, our houses are as holy—or ought to be—as every church or chapel! Some seem to think that there is some peculiar sanctity about aisles and oak seats, stone pillars, and gothic arches. Holiness cannot belong to stones—holiness has to do with nothing except the acts and thoughts of intelligent subjects! And if holiness can by metaphor belong to places or substances, it must be through holy Christian minds that are in contact with them. I will not have it that yonder parish church, or that this place is one that is more holy than that room where you live—if you there offer prayer and praise. Oh, brothers and

sisters, you must not think that the table and the font, and the baptistery are holy! No, no—if there is holiness in them, so may there be in your own table, in your own labors, and in your own tools which you handle. At least there will be as much in one as in the other if, with a holy mind, you serve God in both! Not *confined* holiness—that is superstition, but *universal* holiness—that is Christianity! Not the bowls upon the altar—that is Judaism, but the bells upon the horses—that is true living godliness, and vital Christianity. See to it, then, Christian friends, in your common daily doings, that the bells upon the horses are HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD!

But horses were also used, as they still are, for toil, and toil, though I have already anticipated the subject—toil is to be holiness to the Lord. The horse is turning over the furrow with the plow, and if it is held by a godly farmer, the bells upon that horse are HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD! And now it is time when the hay should be cut down and carted. If with gratitude in his bosom, the farmer takes home the fruit of the earth, the carting is HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD! And when harvest time comes round, and all the country is glad, every shout of harvest time ought to be a *holy* shout; every smile that is on the brow of the tiller of the soil should be a holy smile; and when he has consecrated his wavesheaf unto his God—when he has given a part of his increase to the poor and needy—and when he has bowed his knees, and thanked the Universal Giver of all good—then the farmer's toil is HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD! I would, my dear brothers and sisters, that you would make your common toils HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD. Come to look upon your meals as though they were sacraments, your clothes as though they were priestly vestments, your common words as though you were preaching daily sermons; and your everyday thoughts as though you were thinking for the Sabbath of holy things. It is not to be always talking religion,

but to be talking *religiously* that makes the Christian! It is not to be performing *outward symbols*—it is to be possessing the *inward spirit*. I believe that there is more piety in going to visit the poor and needy, and scattering your substance among them; more piety in teaching the poor ignorant ragged child, more piety in seeking to help some poor struggling tradesman, than there is in many a long prayer and many a sanctimonious whine! Yes, and in many a long and eloquent discourse. That common piety which like common sense is most often the most uncommon of all is what we need to have, and if I could make one man among you become thus consecrated, I should think I had, under God, done as much as though I poured you out in scores upon the plain of India, or sent you to edify the Chinese, or to instruct the Ethiopian! We need you as missionaries *here*! We need you as missionaries in daily life, and we must have you, too, or else the Church will not increase, nor will the name of Christ be magnified! I have thus sought to make you listen to the ringing of these bells.

II. Now for the second point. Let us **COMMEND THE MUSIC** of the bells upon the horses.

The religion of common life I must commend, first of all, for its *loudness*. There are many men who do not hear the Church bell who will hear the bells upon the horses. I mean by that, that preach as frequently as we may, some people will never believe us—but they cannot help believing what they see in our lives! We may extol Christ, and they will say, “It is his office and duty.” But if our actions are what they should be—if our lives are saturated with the spirit of Jesus—they cannot help hearing us! They may put their fingers in their ears, and not hear our sermons, but they must hear our sermons—for they can hear them through their eyes as well as through their ears—if we, in our daily walk, act as becomes the gospel of Christ!

Then, again, I commend the music of these horses' bells, not only for loudness, but for *clearness*. Many people cannot understand our sermons. There are words we use that they do not try to comprehend, and some which the carnal mind cannot receive. But they can understand *your* sermons, if they cannot mine! If you have traded honorably; if you, instead of taking undue advantage, have only taken that which is your due; if they have seen you refuse to tell a lie though you might have gained much by it; if they have known you to stand firm in your integrity, while others laughed at you as a fool and a madman—they can understand it. *My* sermons may be mystifying, but *yours* would not be! The church bell may sometimes have a cracked note, but the bells upon the horses will be so clear that they will be compelled in their consciences to believe what you teach!

Then, again, I commend the music of these bells for its *constancy*. The church bell rings but once a week. I am preaching to you some three or four sermons in a week, but you, if you consecrate your common things, will be preaching all day long! You will keep the bells upon the horses ringing every time the horses nod their heads; every time they move there will be a fresh peal—and that is the advantage of putting the bells *not* on the steeple—but on the *horse*—so that they must always ring! This place is shut up a great portion of the week, and only opened occasionally for worship. But you ought to keep your preaching places open always. There, behind the counter, should be *your* pulpit; or in the Corn Exchange, or the Market, or in the family; you should always be preaching! Your life should be always one continual sacrament, always one constant service of God. I commend this music, then, for its constancy as well as for its loudness, and for its clearness.

Again, we must praise it for its *universality*. *My* church bell can only ring in one place, and the bells in the parish church only ring in the steeples where they hang. But the bells upon

the horses ring wherever the horses go! And so with *your piety*—it will ring wherever you go. You can preach in the lodging-house; you can preach in the backroom where poverty has found a haunt; you can preach wherever God in His providence has cast you! At the Boardroom table; in the midst of the corporation; in the Senate; in the House of Commons—you can preach wherever God calls you! I say again, the bells upon the horses ring wherever the horses go, and so must your piety ring wherever you are. This universal preaching in every court and lane, and alley is far better for effect than our preaching ever can be!

Once more, I commend the bells upon the horses for their *harmony*. You know our church bells ring different notes. You go into one, you hear 'Tractarianism; you go into another, and you hear sound evangelical doctrine; you enter another, and you hear all but infidelity. Church bells run through the octave of tone. Among true Christians, our bells often ring a little differently. My Wesleyan brothers' bell does not ring quite the same as mine—nor mine exactly the same as the Independents'. But, mark, the bells on the horses are all alike! One Christian's life is like another Christian's life. There is nothing contradictory in the practical sermon, even if there is in the *doctrinal*. If the vocal testimony of the Church should be somewhat divided, yet the loving testimony of the Church is always one, if it is always holiness, holiness, holiness unto the Lord! See to it, then, that you ring these bells upon the horses for their lovely harmony and the absence of all discord!

And then, once more, I commend the bells upon the horses, for they ring out a *divine* note. Our church bells do not always do that. Sometimes our sermons are a little to the honor and glory of the speaker, a little to the honor and glory of a particular Church, but the bells on the horses ring out not the glory of man but holiness to the Lord—to the Lord—to the

Lord! And so if you consecrate your whole life, the testimony of that life may be to *your* credit, but still it will be far more to the honor and glory *of God!* There will be no fear that *man* shall take the honor of your pious consecration, of your holy watchfulness, of your humble integrity, of your industry, your perseverance, and your constancy in the path of right. The bells upon your horses shall ring a more divine note than I fear will yet be rung from the bells of our pulpit! I have thus sought to commend the music.

III. And now I close, by asking you to go home and **TUNE YOUR BELLS TO THIS NOTE.**

You have many bells in your house; go home and tune, first of all, the *chamber* bell. It is an ill thing when a Christian husband is a worse husband than a worldly one! It is an evil thing when the husband and wife do not live together as partakers of the grace of Christ. Perhaps you will say this is a very homely remark, but I think it is a very necessary one—for if a man cannot conduct himself well in his own family—what is he in the Church? I fear there have been many who have been mighty men in the Church who, if their private affairs had been a little examined, might have come out a little scarred and marred in the ordeal. Should I have a Christian man here who is not acting according to the Christian mandate? Should I have a Christian woman here who pulls her house down with her own hands through idleness and carelessness? Let me speak to them. How can the husband think of edifying others at the prayer meeting until first he is what he should be before his own house? The husband is to love his wife, even as Christ loved the Church. The wife must see that she reverences her husband. The children must be obedient, and the household affairs must be ordered with discretion—or else your bells are *not* HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD.

Then, when you have looked at that, look at the *kitchen bell*. See that it sounds forth Holiness to the Lord. Let the servant—not with eye-service as a man pleaser, serve her master, and let the master take care that he gives unto his servant that which is just and equal. Oh, it is a blessed thing when there is piety in the kitchen, and when the whole household is a Church! Indeed, my brothers and sisters, I can speak the joy of one who has servants who fear God. Very often have my eyes been filled with tears through the peace and joy, and rest of spirit that I have had in my own household since God has given me those who fear His name. See to it that the kitchen bell does not ring a contrary note to your parlor bell, for if the kitchen can say—“My master is pious abroad, but he is wicked at home; he can talk very well in the pulpit, and pray very nicely at the prayer meeting, but he neglects us—he is harsh, overbearing and passionate”—then it will spoil all my sermons! If you say to the servants, “Come and hear our minister,” she will say, “I do not want to hear him; if he is not a better man than you are, he will not do much good for me.” Mark then, if the bells of the horses are to be holy, certainly the bells of the kitchen should be holy, too!

Then, some of you have got a *shop* bell—a little bell which rings as soon as ever anyone comes in. Now, take care that this is Holiness to the Lord. If people get cheated at other shops, do not let them get cheated at yours, or they will be sure to say, “Ah! *You* hear Spurgeon. That is your religion, is it?” They shall be sure to throw the blame on your *religion*, and not on *you*. If there is a place where they get short-weighted, let it never be your place! If there is a place where there is a lack of integrity, or civility, or attention—let it not be your place! Seek so to act that you do not make your religion benefit your trade—rather keep your trade always in subservience to your religion, and seek to glorify God in all that you do. Some of you have got a

factory bell that rings at certain hours. And I see your men come streaming down the street to work. Now, make that bell Holiness to the Lord! When will the time come when all these quarrels shall be done between master and man? When shall the day come when both of them shall seek to have perfect peace and harmony? It is to their mutual interest, let them know. Oh, when shall it be that the workman shall feel that he has all that which is just and equal? And on the other hand, when shall the master feel that he has not to deal with men who when given an inch, will take a mile, but who are content to deal as fairly with him as he would with them? If I have any of your great cotton lords here; if I have any men who have many servants—let them take care that their religion rings their factory bell—or else I would not give a farthing for all their religion, let them give what they may towards the maintenance of it! Then, some of you have got a *visiting* bell; for I have seen it marked over, “*visitors*.” And what are visits among the higher classes? It was my misfortune, once, to sit in the corner of a drawing room, and listen to the conversation during a visit. If it had been condensed into the sense or usefulness it contained, it might have been spoken in something like the thousandth part of a second! But there it went on, talk, talk, and talk, about nothing at all, and when it was done, they went away, I have no doubt, greatly refreshed! Now, I think the visits of Christian people should never be of that kind. If you go to see anybody, know what you are going for, and have a message to go with—go with some intention! If God had meant you and me to waste our time in flying visits, He would have made us butterflies and not men; He would have made us so that we might sip the nectar from the flowers like bees, instead of which He has made men whose time is precious, and whose hours cannot be weighed in the scale with diamonds. Let your visits be rather to the sick to give them comfort; to the poor to give them help;

to your friends to show yourself friendly, and to the godly to get godly refreshment, than to the frivolous to waste an hour, or to the fashionable to maintain a fancied dignity! Let everything, whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, be done to the glory of God! Physician, there is a bell at your door—let that be Holiness to the Lord. Let those kind acts of yours to the distressed poor—let those divine acts of stooping down to the poor wayfarer in his suffering, consecrate your practice! Let your bell be Holiness to the Lord! Let each of you, whatever his calling may be, seek to find some special way in which that calling may contribute to the glory of Christ! You are a little star in the Pleiades— do not wish to be the north star; if you were taken out of the Pleiades, the constellation would not be what it now is. Keep where you are, but shed your special rays upon the earth; and if you are but a little star—do not the little stars together shed much light, and would not the earth be dark if they all were quenched?

I have tried to preach a plain homely sermon. But perhaps I have not hit the mark. Perhaps I have not made you feel what I want you to feel. Why, I would have every dustman's bell HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD! Whatever your business is—though you are a scavenger, sweep a crossing, black shoes— whatever you have to do, let everything be done to the glory of God! And if any say it cannot be done, you show them the way, for the best practical proof is the proof of fact! I may preach today, and preach 20 days about making the bells upon the horses Holiness to the Lord, but if you do not tune your own private conversation, the text will but excite laughter among some, and no practical profit will it be to any! Is there anything wrong at home? Go and set it right! Is there anything wrong in the shop or in the kitchen? If you have not done what you ought to have done as a Christian; if you have not acted as you ought to have done in your trade—go and do better! Not

that you are to be saved by *works*—I have been speaking to those who *are saved already!* Being saved, show by your profession what you believe, and would by your acts glorify your Master!

I pray by God's grace you will think often of this text—"In that day shall there be on the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD."

400 OUR MISERIES, MESSENGERS OF MERCY – HOS. 6:1-2

**A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Morning, July 14th, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

“Come and let us return unto the Lord: for He has torn, and He will heal us. He has smitten, and He will bind us up. After two days He will revive us: in the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight.” — Hosea 6:1-2

TENDER FATHERS seek first to train their children by gentle means. The Lord, in His long-suffering, dealt very kindly with His erring Israel, sending them favor after favor, and blessing after blessing, saying by His acts, “I have given them their corn and their wine, and their oil, they will surely turn unto Me and say, ‘Our Father, You shall be the guide of our youth.’” But the more He multiplied His bounties, the more they multiplied their iniquities, as they burned sacrifice unto the gods of Edom and of Moab— even to those that were no gods, saying, “These are your gods, O Israel, which have given unto you your corn, and your wine, and your oil.” So they spent the mercies of God in sacrifice upon their idols, and committed transgressions with the false gods of the heathen, consuming with their lusts the very mercies which God had sent to bring them to repentance! When at last God saw that this measure did not move them, because their sin was written as with an iron pen, and engraved upon the very horns of their altars, then

He tried harsher means; He hewed them by the prophets; they rose early, and they prophesied until the going down of the sun, giving line upon line, precept upon precept, threatening them with the anger, and vengeance of God. At last that vengeance came; He carried them away captive, and they went into a land that they knew not, among a cruel people, whose speech they could not understand. Again He delivered them out of the hand of their enemy; and yet, again, because of their sin, He sold them to Assyria, and afterwards to Babylon, that at last, after they had been rent and torn, they might say within themselves, “Come, and let us return unto the Lord.” Now, my brothers and sisters, the people of Israel are but a picture of ourselves; especially are they representatives of a certain class, some of whom are now present. God has tried you with mercy upon mercy; kept you long in health till you scarcely ever had a day’s sickness; given you all that you could wish, till your cup was brimming and flowing over; but you used His mercies for your own self-indulgence, and the bodily strength which was given you to be a blessing, you have made a curse. God has granted to you streams of mercy never ceasing, but your return has been streams of sin, broad, and black, and deep!

And now, today, He has been changing His ways with you. I am speaking to some whom God has of late heavily afflicted; seeing gentler means would not do, He has turned your wine into wormwood, and your honey into gall; he has made you sick in body, and dispirited in mind. Your earthly goods are melting like snow before the summer’s sun; your children die before your very eyes, and the desire of your heart is taken away with a stroke. God has made all His waves and His billows go over you; the law has sounded its trumpet in your ears and brought your sin to remembrance; conscience has started up in alarm from its long sleep, and cries like a mighty man who wakes up from his slumber and finds the camp besieged. You

are troubled and sorely broken; your heart is melted like wax, so that while you are sitting in the house of God today, you are complaining, “I am the man who has seen affliction.” And perhaps worse than that, you are groaning, “His wrath lies hard upon me, I cannot look up.” It is to you I am about to speak this morning. I single you out from the crowd, and I trust while I address you, there also may be some words of comfort or of instruction for the rest of the congregation. Oh, may you, my hearer, you upon whom I fix my eyes this morning, you whose case is the case of Israel in Hosea, may you say, “Come, and let us return unto the Lord, for He has torn, and He will heal us. He has smitten, and He will bind us up.” I desire to come straight up to you who are in this condition, and put my hand inside yours, holding you fast while I strive in God’s name to reason with you, beseeching God the Holy Spirit to reason better than I can! I pray He sweetly moves your soul, till you say, “I will arise and go unto my Father.”

Three things I must do this morning. First, I must *deal a blow at the old Tempter, who has got the first hand at you*. Secondly, I will come to *reason comfortably with you*. And then, thirdly, I must *lovingly persuade you*, saying—“Come, let us return unto the Lord.”

I. First then, I must DEAL A BLOW AT THE OLD TEMPTER WHO HAS GONE BEFORE ME, AND HAS BEGUN TO DECEIVE YOU.

I cannot tell the exact temptation that Satan has been using with you, but I think it is very likely to be one of four.

The first one has been this—“Oh,” he says, “see how troubled you are; nothing prospers with you; what pains of body you suffer, and how depressed you are in spirit! God is a tyrant to you; He treats you cruelly—*hate* Him—set your teeth together and curse Him. Say, ‘If He treats me thus, He is *not* a God that I can love; I will abhor Him from my very soul.’” I have uttered that temptation in startling language because such

dark insinuations as this have been very common with much tried and troubled men. I remember many who, in telling their experience of how they were brought to Christ, have confessed that when the first hammer of God's law fell upon their hearts, it hardened them. When God smote, they were like the bullock which kicks against the pricks of the ox-goad; they felt like a high blooded, unbroken horse—the bit was in their mouths, but they pulled and tugged at it—and the more it cut and wounded them, the more resolved they were that they would not turn. In fact, hatred was stirred up against God by what was intended to bring them to His feet! Soul, does Satan tempt you thus? Then indeed it is a sad proof that *sin is madness*. I can only compare your case to yon poor maniac who has labored hard to destroy himself by throwing himself into the fire, or into the water. Some kind person, willing to bear all the inconveniences of such an office, has volunteered to be his keeper. Look, the man is dashing to the water's brink, and means to throw himself into the stream! His keeper holds him back, and with stern words and sterner acts throws him down upon the ground, and binds him so that he cannot take the fatal leap. But look again! He longs to burn himself; he makes a tremendous effort to thrust his body into the flame, but his keeper shuts him up in a room where he cannot get at the devouring flame. All the while this madman hates him, curses him, spits upon him, and would do anything if he could but kill his keeper and tear him to pieces in his fury! Mark you, when the maniac shall get back his reason, he will kiss the feet of that man whom now he hates, he will say—"I bless you for the loving violence which has restrained me from my own destruction; I thank you for denying me my own will; that you stood in my path, and thwarted my mad desires, and that you would not let me ruin myself." Now, poor sinner, God is doing this with you! Oh, do not hate Him. He does not hate *you*. He is not dealing with you

in wrath, but in mercy! There is still shining behind the black cloud, the sun of His mercy. Oh, that Satan may be cast out of you, that you may not be tempted to hate God because of His sore smiting of you!

Or, perhaps, the temptations of Satan have taken another shape—not so much hatred as *sullenness*. You have lost all you care for now, and you think that your state does not matter much to you; you would as soon die as live, and as for your soul, you think you cannot be more wretched in hell itself than you are, and you say, “So let it be; it is so bad that it cannot be mended.” You do not bestir yourself, but you sit down with a stony heart waiting to be crushed. You are like some poor man ignorant on the frozen Alps, who feels sleep creeping upon him, and is content to lie down there and die, as he certainly must unless some friendly hand shall shake him out of his desperate sleep. There is a kind of numbness which pain brings to the body, which has its equivalent in the spirit, numbness because the grief has been so acute, that nature could bear no more. Then death itself loses its horror in the nearer terrors of the soul. “My soul chooses strangling rather than life.” Soul, Satan desires to have you that he may utterly destroy you, and this is one of his ways—he seeks to make you sluggish that he may find you dead; for when you are sullen he knows that the warnings of the ministry, and the earnest exhortations of the gospel, will have but little force with you. Wake, man, wake! Your danger is awful! Multitudes have perished here. Wake, I pray you, wake! Oh, if you have any sensibility left, wake up! Depend on it, that bad as your case is, it will be worse in the world to come unless the badness of it is now blessed to your soul. Oh, man, the pains you have had as yet are but as a hurt finger—they are but mere trifles compared with the miseries of eternity! Instead of opiates to make you sleep, let them be goads to stir your sluggish flesh, and make you start from the deadly

couch of presumption. I would be but too glad if I might thrust lancets into you again, and again, anything sooner than you should sleep that sleep of death and be utterly destroyed.

Possibly, however, the temptation of Satan has taken the form of *despair*. “Oh,” he says, “there is no hope for you; you can clearly perceive that you are the subject of divine hatred; God has not dealt with others as He has with you; these trials are but the first drops of the long shower of His eternal wrath. Depend upon it,” says Satan, “now that your conscience is in this state, your convictions will deepen into a settled remorse! And then that remorse will end in final despair, and everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord; your sins are too many, and too great! There is hope for any man—but there is no hope for you—you are beyond the lines of mercy. The arm of divine grace is not long enough or strong enough to reach such a wretch as you are! You are not dammed in hell yet, but you are the same as if you were; you are reprobate; the decree shuts you out of heaven, while the greatness of your sin confirms it! You are bound up in fetters that cannot be broken, and will be cast into that horrible pit of hell, out of which you never can be drawn.” Satan, you are a LIAR! Oh, that this poor heart did know it—I tell you this to your face, Satan, for you did once bewitch *me* with your lies! You did bring me into this state of despair, too—till I was ready to put an end to myself, because I thought nothing awaited me but the wrath of God. Oh, you lying hell-hound, how you did slander my Lord and Master! He was willing to receive me, but you made me think He would reject me! He stood waiting at the door of my heart, saying, “Open to Me,” but you said that He had gone, that He had shut up the heart of His compassion, and doomed me forever to destruction! I will get even with you, you great destroyer of souls, for your cruel treachery with me—as long as I live, I will raise the hue and cry against you! Soul, do not

believe him—he is a murderer of souls—and a liar from the beginning. There *is* hope for *you!* There is hope for you *now!* There is still the gospel preached to you; still is it freely presented in your hearing. May you say today, “Come, let us return unto the Lord,” and He *will* heal you. He *will* bind you up; He will receive you to His heart; He will in no wise cast you out!

But it may occur, that yet a fourth temptation has been tried with some of you. Satan has said, “Well, now, you can see it is of no use; give it up altogether, and if you cannot be happy one way, try another! You clearly perceive that you are shut out of heaven, well, make the best of this world. Now,” says the devil, “Christ will not have you, what is the use of your going to a place of worship? Do not go! Stay away; it is hopeless. The gospel will never be of any use to you; you have heard it these three or four years, and you only are more hardened; don’t go again! Besides, why make yourself miserable for nothing? Drink your fill of the world’s delight; if you cannot get the best good, get the other. Eat, drink and be merry; live a fast life, and satisfy yourself. You may as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb; you may as well perish for a great sin as perish for a little one! God evidently has cast you off—follow your own way—and choose your own delight.” Oh, soul! Oh, soul! How sad it is that these afflictions and warnings of conscience, which are meant to bring you *to* Christ, should be used by Satan as the reason why you should go *from* Christ! Oh, soul, the Lord has designs of mercy for you now, He has begun to try you in your circumstances and afflict you in your soul! And the devil knows it, and is afraid of losing you, and so he wants you to get out of the way of mercy just when mercy is coming. What? Suppose you have as yet, gained no good by attending the means of grace—does that prove that you will not soon be blessed? You are traveling in the wilderness; you had a torch, and the wind

blew it out; you lit it again, and it blew it out again; do not say that therefore you will never see! The sun is rising, the sun is rising, and the fact that torches have been blown out does not prove that the night will last forever. If your false hopes have left you, and your self-righteous trusts have all been taken away, I am glad! I am glad it is dark with you—for the darkest part of the night is that which heralds the dawning of the day?! I am glad the Lord has laid you low, for it is now He means to lift you up! Do not, I pray you, be tricked out of this divine mercy by the temptations of the fiend of hell. Rouse yourself, man! Cry, “Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him! If I am at Bethesda’s pool, and the water is not stirred, yet will I die there,” (that you will never do—mark that)! “Though I pray, and He hears me not, yet my cries even to my dying hour shall go up to Him.” And mark you, He will surely hear you! Only, do not be led astray by the Evil One, to turn what is the mercy of God, into an excuse for excess of riot! Instead, listen now to the voice of wisdom and mercy, while I seek in the second place, to reason with you comfortably that I may bring you to say, “Come, let us return unto the Lord.”

II. Now, forget your troubles for a little while if you can, or only think of them as a background for the brightness of **THE COMFORT** which I would give you as God’s messenger.

1. So, you say you have had so many trials in life, and so many strivings of conscience, that therefore you feel you must be too guilty to be saved? Do you think that you have been punished for your sins? Permit me to remind you that this is not the place where the Judge of all the earth usually punishes sin; His wrath He reserves for the day of judgment, and the world to come. All sorrow is the result of sin, but still it does not come to any particular man except in some remarkable instances. Now, there was Job—will you equal him among the saints? Was he not one of the chief of them? Yet, he was more

tried than any other man; that evidently was not because he was a greater sinner than others. Do you not know the fact that often the wickedest men are the most prosperous, while the most holy are the most afflicted? Therefore, this is not the place where God dispenses providence according to the sole and absolute rule of *justice*—that is to be in the world to come. How would you account for such an instance as this, which occurred not long ago in a certain railway accident? There were two men who entered the train; one of them a Christian, the other a worldling. The Christian took his seat; so did the other. At a station the worldly one said, “I should like a game of cards; will you get out and go with me?—there is So-and- So in such a carriage; come with me, and we will play together.” “No,” said the other, “I would much rather be out of your company, if that is what you are going to do.” “Well then,” said he, “good morning, I am going there.” An accident of the most frightful character occurred. The Christian saw those on each side of him killed—his two companions crushed, and he himself, such a mass of bruises and broken bones as you scarcely ever saw; his leg was broken in seven different places and he was, as it seemed, at death’s door. His companion who went to play cards was perfectly safe, and the carriage in which he rode was untouched! Now, this plainly shows that *this* is not the world in which God deals with men according to the rules of justice! Ships sink whether men are at prayer, or whether they are cursing God! Providence here is not ordered according to the rule by which God shall dispense His favors or His fury in the world to come! This is the land of long-suffering rather than of execution; this is the land where God in His wise providence rather brings us to repentance than to punishment!

Now, I can see the hand of God in all. The man who escaped as a card player, I fear, was hardened by the providence by which he escaped. Yet, mark you, God was glorified,

because His providence will become a savor of death unto death to that man should he live and die impenitent, while in the Christian who was thus injured, God is honored, for if you could see him as I saw him—with his smiling face relating the fact that he has never murmured once, though he had laid upon his bed for many weeks—you would only admire the favor and goodness of God which gave the sinner space for repentance, and gave the believer room to display the grace of patience. It was good for the one who was afflicted; it was good for the other that he escaped. But this is not the hand of punishment, and your having more afflictions than others may be because God loves you! Certainly it is not because He hates you. I have seen the wicked in great power—spreading themselves like green bay trees; and I have seen them in their death, too, and they are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men. They are at ease; they are settled on their lees; they are not emptied from vessel to vessel. As for God's people—they are chastened every morning, and vexed every evening—and the Lord's hand lies heavy on them! Yet, there is God's goodness in that heavy hand, and infinite loving kindness in their tribulations! God only gives the wicked prosperity as we give husks to swine; He gives them this world's transient things, because He loves them not. I pray you then, do not misconstrue your sufferings of body and mind—they may be tokens of mercy! They certainly are not indicators of any special wrath.

Secondly, you will say that you have great distress of mind, and trials of soul, and therefore, there is no hope for you. I say, therefore, *there is hope!* Perhaps some of those troubles of mind come from Satan. Now observe this, Satan very seldom troubles those men who are all his own. A poor Negro, who had been tempted by Satan, was once laughed at by his master about it. He said, "The devil never tempts me; I do not even

know that there is such a being in existence!” They went out sometime later, to hunt wild ducks, and as the master shot at a covey of them, and some of them were wounded, he was exceedingly earnest with clubs and stones to secure those that were wounded—while he left those that were evidently dead, to float on the stream till he had time to pick them up. This gave the Negro a fine opportunity of explaining his master’s experience. “Massa, while you was a splashin’ in de water after dem wounded ducks, and lettin’ de dead ones float on, it jist come into my mind, why it is dat de debil troubles me so much, while he lets you alone. You are like de dead ducks—he’s sure he’s got you safe. I’m like de wounded ones—trying to git away from him—and he’s afraid I’ll do it, so he makes all de fuss after me, and jist lets you float on down de stream. He knows he can get you any time, but he knows it now or never wid me. If you were to begin to flutter a little, and show signs like you were a goin’ to get away from him, he would make jist as big a splashin’ after you as he does after me.”

But again, you will remember, that it is not God’s way to send convictions of sin to reprobates. Do men plow the sand? Do they send their oxen upon the rock? Do they attempt to use materials that are utterly rotten? No, they give them up, and leave them alone. Now, why is the all-wise Jehovah at work with you, unless He has gracious designs for you? I hope it is because He is about to bring you to Himself.

Let me show you in the *third* place, that this is according to the analogy of nature. Did you ever hear this parable? There was a certain shepherd who had a sheep which he desired to lead into another and better field. He called it, but it would not come; he led it, but it would not follow; he drove it, but it would only follow its own devices. At last he thought within himself, “I will do this.” The sheep had a little lamb by its side, and the shepherd took the lamb up in his arms, and carried it away and

then the ewe came, too! And so with you—God has been calling to *you*, mother, and you did not come. Christ said “Come,” and you would not. He sent affliction, but you would not come; then He took your child away, and you came then; you followed the Savior then. You see, it was loving work on the shepherd’s part—he did but take the lamb to save the sheep! The Savior took your child to heaven that He might bring *you* to heaven. We had before the church the other night a sister who is here now. I dare say there were four in the family, and the Lord took one child away. But that was not enough, He took another and another—and the fourth lay sick and ready to die, and then the mother’s heart was broken—and mother and father both came to Jesus! Oh, blessed afflictions, blessed losses, blessed deaths that end in spiritual life! Now this, I trust, is how God is dealing with you. You know, if a man has a field, and desires to gather a harvest from it, what does he do? First of all he plows it. The field might say, “Why these scars across my face? Why thus upturn my sods?” Because there can be no sowing till there has been plowing! Sharp plowshares make furrows for good seed. Or take yet another picture from nature. A man desires to make of a rusty piece of iron, a bright sword which shall be serviceable to a great warrior. What does he do? He puts it into the fire and melts it; he takes away all its dross and removes all its impurities; then he fashions it with his hammer; he beats it full sore upon the anvil; he tempers it in one fire after another, till at last it comes out a good blade that will not snap in the day of warfare. This is what God does with you—I pray you do not misread the book of God’s providence; for if you read it aright it runs thus—“I will have mercy on this man, and therefore have I smitten him and wounded him. Come, therefore, let us return unto the Lord, for He has wounded and He will heal; He has smitten and He will bind us up.”

I have other arguments to use, and you must bear with me somewhat patiently. You are wounded in spirit this morning, poor mourner, will you remember that it is God's delight to bind up broken hearts? "He counts the number of the stars." What is the next verse—do you remember it?—"He binds up the broken in heart." What a mighty stoop this is! From counting the stars and leading them forth, mighty worlds though they are, He bows to become a surgeon to the poor wounded heart! You know what Christ's occupation is in heaven?—"He shall wipe away tears from off all faces." What a blessed occupation—wiping away tears! Soul, Christ will be glad to wipe away your tears now! He delights to do it—Christ is never happier than when He is showing His heart to sinners; He is so glad when He can find His poor lost sheep, and put it on His shoulders and carry it home. It will make you glad to be saved; but He will be infinitely glad to save you, and delighted to receive you, for He delights in mercy.

Please remember, yet once again, that the wounds which you now feel *He* made Himself, and if He is willing to heal any wounds, how much more those that He has Himself made? There are some diseases in which the surgeon is compelled to wound; the proud flesh has gotten in; the cure has been a bad one, and in order that it may be thoroughly sound, he perhaps makes a cross cut—a deep cross cut that goes into the very core of the matter. Well, his lances have made a bad wound—do you think the doctor will not do his best to heal it? I will go to him and say, "Surgeon, you did yourself make the wound; you made it in order to my healing; heal the wound, I pray you, heal me." Occasionally when a man has broken his leg, it has been badly set by some bungler, and when he has consulted a skillful surgeon, he says, "I can do nothing for you till I break your leg again." And so often is it with men's minds; they get peace, peace, when there is no peace, and there is no doing anything

with them until God breaks their heart again! Suppose a surgeon should break a man's leg again; do you think he would go away and leave the poor man without setting it? No, he broke it that he might heal it, that he might make the cure a sound one. And so is it, perhaps, with your broken heart. Go to Him, then, go to Him; say, "Lord, You did break my heart. I was a hard blasphemer once, but You have brought me to my knees. I once said, 'I would never enter a place of worship.' Lord, you know I go there now, though I get no comfort, but I pray You give me comfort. It was such-and-such a sermon that brought me to despair; Lord, guide Your servant to preach another that will bring me into liberty! Lord, if You have not broken my heart, break it now! But if you have broken it, Lord, I appeal to You to heal it. You have begun the work by killing me, finish the work by making me alive. You have begun by stripping me, Lord, clothe me." That is a good argument; He will surely do it; He will not fail to carry on and complete that which He has begun to perform!

Once more only—and perhaps this will be the best argument of all—remember you have got His promise for it. The text I read is a promise. It looks at first sight as if it were spoken by man, and so it is; but then, inasmuch as it is put in God's book as the utterance of God's inspired prophet, it is a part of God's word, and it is warranted to be most true. "He has torn, and He will heal." Go and put your finger on this text and say, "Lord, You have torn me, and it is written in Your Word, 'He will heal us.'"—

"Lord, I know You cannot lie,
Heal my soul or else I die."

Put you your finger on the next—"He will bind us up." Say, "Lord, I do not deserve it; I deserve only to perish, but then

You have said You will do it; be as good as Your Word. Lord, here is a poor sinner near despair, he comes to You; bind up his broken heart; give him peace.” And soul, the everlasting hills shall bow, the hoary deep shall itself be burned up, and earth’s foundation shall be removed, but God’s word shall never pass away, nor shall His promise fail in one single case! Only believe the promise! Receive the promise, and this very day, poor broken Heart, He will heal your wounds, and you shall have joy and peace, in believing through Jesus Christ our Lord!

III. I shall not detain you much longer, but I have now, the third point to *earnestly* dwell upon. O Spirit of the living God, bless these words! Jesus, woo hearts to Yourself while we seek to win them to Your love!

And now, I would come **LOVINGLY TO PERSUADE YOU**, and the persuasion I would use is this—“Come, let *us* return unto the Lord.” Do you see it? The prophet does not say, “Go,” but “*Come*.” He does not say, “Go you,” but “Come, let *us*.” Poor soul, you say there is none like yourself; behold I take my place side-by-side with you! Are you a sinner? So am I. Do you deserve God’s wrath? So do I. Have you gone very far astray? So have I. Come, let *us* return; let *us* go together. Or if that does not comfort you enough, let me tell you, I have gone as you now are; as despairing, perhaps more so; as cast down, perhaps worse; but I have found Him to be a loving Savior, a blessed Savior, willing and able to save to the uttermost! Soul, come and try Him! Come and try Him! My brothers and sisters in Christ— did Christ reject you when you came to Him? You were as bad as others, some of you were worse—did He reject you? I am sure that if I should ask it, there would be not 1,000 here, but a vast company who would rise and say, “I sought the Lord, and He heard me! This poor man cried, and the Lord

heard me and delivered me from all my fears.” Soul, come, let *us* return! He saved me; He will save you!

“Tell it unto sinners tell—
I am, I am saved from hell.”

If he could and would save one, why not another; and if the thousands of Israel, why not poor sinful *you*?

Then, that I may persuade you further, let me remind you that to return to God is not a cruel request. He does not ask you to perform a pilgrimage and blister your weary feet, or to thrust an iron in your back, and swing yourself aloft as does the Hindu. He asks you not to lie on a bed of spikes, or starve yourself till you can count your bones. He asks no suffering of you—for Christ has suffered for you! All He asks is that you would return to Him and what is that? That you would be unfeignedly sorry for your past sins; that you would ask His grace to keep you from sin in the future; that you would now believe in Christ who is set forth to be the propitiation for sin; that through faith in His blood you may see your sin forever put away, and all your iniquity cancelled. That is neither a hard nor a cruel demand! It is for your good, as well as for His glory. O, Spirit of God, make the sinner now willing to repent and to believe in Christ!

But, yet again, remember the comfortable fruits which will surely follow if you return. What would you think if I could show you yourself within a week? There he stands; he is singing

“A debtor to mercy alone,
Of covenant mercy I sing!
Nor fear with Your righteousness on,
My person and offering to bring.

The terrors of law and of God,
With me can have nothing to do;
My Savior's obedience and blood,
Hide all my transgressions from view!"

What man is that? Why that is the man who came in here last Sunday morning, and said he was utterly lost! He heard the minister exhort him to trust Christ, and he did it, by the grace of God, and that is where he is standing now. He has been brought up out of a horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and his feet are set upon the rock! "If I thought that would be the case," says one, "I would try it." My dear sir, you need not *think*—it *will* be the case! God promises—and He cannot lie—"He who believes and is baptized"—He does not say, "*may* be," but "*shall be* saved." And God's "shalls" and "wills" do not play with men; but He speaks them in real earnestness. "Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Dare you say that this is not true? "No," you say, "it is undoubtedly true." Well, then, if you call upon the name of the Lord, you shall be saved, or else the promise is false! Again, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they are red like crimson, they will be whiter than snow." Do you believe that? Is it not a promise made to the penitent who casts himself at the feet of Jesus? Very well, try it personally, and if you cast yourself there—either this book must be withdrawn, God must change, Christ's blood must lose its power—or else He must and will save you! Oh, that there were such a heart in you, and such a mind towards God, that you would now say, "I do believe; I will believe; I trust my Savior with my soul." This done, you are saved!

Once more, may I not plead with you to return to God because of the precious love of Christ? Love, I know, has great power to move. You will remember how in that wonderful

book, “Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” there is a singular instance of the power of love. Miss Ophelia had been laboring to train up that wicked girl, Topsy, but she would not learn anything. Miss Ophelia tried to make her say the Assembly’s Catechism, in order that she might know all about it. But one day, Eva, the little Eva, (the very gospel incarnate, just as Miss Ophelia was the picture of the law), sits down by her side, and says to her, “Topsy, why will you be so naughty? What is it makes you so wicked?” “Miss Eva,” says Topsy, “it aren’t no use my being good, nobody loves me.” The little girl puts her arm round her neck, and kisses her, saying, “Why I love you, Topsy, and it grieves me very much to see you so naughty.” “Oh,” said Topsy, “I will try to be good if you will but love me.” Love had won the poor child, and had subdued her. Well, now, perhaps you are saying, “If Christ would but say He would love me, I think I could repent that I ever sinned against Him. I think I would be willing to give Him my heart.” Soul, if that is what you say, He does love you! He loved you and gave Himself for you. Behold His cross—is there better proof of His love than that? See His flowing wounds; hear how He groans; behold Him dying! “It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” and He saves them because He loves them. Oh, if that love will woo you, it is indeed in plenteous abundance, flowing down to you now! “Ah, well,” you say, “I cannot do enough for Him.” If that is true, I am glad you have got as far as that, and I have finished when I have told you an anecdote which I trust will do us all good.

A missionary was preaching to the Maori tribe of the New Zealanders. He had been telling them of the suffering love of Christ, how He had poured forth His soul unto death for them; and as he concluded, the hills rung to the thrilling question—“Is it nothing to all who pass by? Behold and see if there is any

sorrow like unto His sorrow?” Then stood forth a plumed and painted chief, the scarred warrior of a thousand fights, and as his lips quivered with suppressed emotion, he spoke, “And did the Son of the Highest suffer all this for us men? Then this Indian chief would like to offer Him some poor return for His great love. Would the Son of God deign to accept this Indian’s hunting dog? Swift of foot and keen of scent, the tribe has not such another, and he has been to the Indian as a friend.” But the missionary told him that the Son of God had need of no such gifts as these. Thinking he had mistaken the gift, the chief resumed—“Yet, maybe He would accept this Indian’s rifle? Unerring of aim, the chief cannot replace it.” Again the missionary shook his head. For a moment the chief paused; then as a new thought struck him, suddenly despoiling himself of his striped blanket, he cried with childlike earnestness, “Perhaps, *He who had not where to lay His head* will yet accept the chieftain’s blanket. This poor Indian will be cold without it, yet it is offered joyfully.” Touched by love’s persistency, the missionary tried to explain to him the real nature of the Son of God; that it was not men’s *gifts* but men’s *hearts* that He yearned for. For a moment a cloud of grief darkened the granite features of the old chief; then as the true nature of the Son of God, by His grace, slowly dawned upon him, casting aside his blanket and rifle he clasped his hands—and looking right up into the blue sky, his face beaming with joy, he exclaimed— “Perhaps the Son of the Blessed One will deign to accept this poor Indian himself?”

Is that what you say this morning? You would give Christ this, and that, and the other? Soul, give Him your *heart*. Say to Him now,

“Jesus, I love Your charming name,
’Tis music to my ear!

I wish I could sound it out so loud,
That earth and heaven might hear.”

And then it is done! The compact is concluded; the work is over; you are in the arms of Christ. You love Him, and He loves you! He wounded, but He has healed; He killed you, but He has made you alive. Go in peace; you are loved much; your sins which are many, by God's grace, are all forgiven you! Amen

401 JACOB'S WAKING EXCLAMATION – GEN. 28:16

**A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Morning, July 21st, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the
Lord is in this place; and I knew it not.” — Genesis 28:16**

THROUGH HIS OWN foolish wisdom Jacob had been compelled to leave his father's house. Perhaps we are scarcely able to judge of the sorrowful feelings which this banishment would beget in his soul. Here we go from one Christian home to another. If we leave the parental roof, we may still hope to sojourn where there is an altar to the Most High God, and where we can still unite with worshippers who fear His name. Not so in Jacob's case! The family of which he was a member, was the only household in the land that worshipped God; or if there were some few others, they were probably unknown to one another, and as far as Jacob knew, when he left his father until he arrived at Padan-Aram, he would not meet with a single person who feared the God of Heaven. He was passing from one oasis to another across a burning desert. We may compare him to a swallow, which for the first time leaves our shore to find no rest until it has passed with weary wing the long leagues of purple sea. You must know, too, that the prevalent notion of the heathens among whom Jacob dwelt was that their gods had only local authority; that, for instance, the god of Gaza was

not the god of Askelon; the god of Beersheba would not be the God of Bethel. Their deities were gods of the hills and not of the valleys, and it may be possible that from great dealings with the heathen, Jacob may have failed to clearly understand the fact that his father's God was not like their gods; so in leaving his father's house, there may have been this troublous thought rising in his mind that he was also leaving his father's God—that now his prayers would scarcely be heard—that he would be an alien from Jehovah's land, and cut off from the congregation of the blessed. Jacob was not at this time a full-grown believer. He was but a babe in grace; his ready yielding to his mother's craft proves his lack of advanced piety; and it is no trifling thing for a weakling to be taken from the nurture of home and cast alone upon an unfriendly and uncongenial world. Happy was it for the fugitive that his Lord's compassion followed him, even when Jacob knew not that God was there! Blessed was the dream which assured him that Jehovah's wing had covered his stony bed as really as it guarded his softer couch in Isaac's tent. The truth seemed to surprise him, but O how sweetly it must have yielded consolation! "Surely," he said, and he opened his eyes to new light as though he knew that the night of distress had passed, and that a day of confidence had begun—"Surely God is in this place and *I knew it not.*"

I would address you this morning upon a topic which may perhaps be as useful to us as to Jacob, if God the Holy Spirit shall but enable me to preach and you to hear. Oh, You who are everywhere, be speedily here now; be You in this place, and may we know it, and tremble in Your presence. I shall speak on three points; first, *the omnipresence of God*—the doctrine of it; secondly, *a recognition of that omnipresence*, or the spirit which is necessary in order to discover the presence of God; and thirdly, *the results of a recognition of this omnipresence*, or the practice which is sure to spring out of the conviction that God is everywhere!

I. First, then, **THE DOCTRINE OF GOD'S OMNIPRESENCE.** He is everywhere.

In the early Christian Church, there was a wicked heresy, which for a long while caused great disturbance, and exceedingly much controversy. There were some who taught that Satan, the representative of evil, was of co-equal power with God, the representative of good. These men found it necessary to attack the doctrine of God's universal power. Their doctrine denied the all-pervading presence of God in the present world, and they seemed to imagine that we should of necessity have to get out of the world of nature altogether, before we could be in the presence of God. Their preachers seemed to teach that there was a great distance between God and His great universe; they always preached of Him as the King who dwelt in the land that was very far off; no, they almost seemed to go as far as though they had said, "Between us and Him there is a great gulf fixed, so that neither can our prayers reach Him, nor can the thoughts of His mercy come down to us." Blessed be God that error has long ago been exploded, and we as Christians, without exception, believe that God is as much in the lowest hell as in the highest heaven, and as truly among the sinful hosts of mortals, as among the blissful choir of immaculate immortals, who day and night praise His name! We believe that He fills heaven and earth, and hell; that He is in the very space which His creation seems to claim, for creatures do not displace God; and even the space which is occupied by His handiworks is still filled with Himself. The rocky bowels of the unsearched- out depths are full of God; where the sea roars, or where the solid granite leaves no space or vacuum, even there is God; not only in the open place, and in the chasm, but penetrating all matter, and abounding everywhere in all, and filling all things with Himself. "In Him we live and move, and have our being, and in Him are all things,

and by Him all things consist.” Yet while we receive the doctrine, it is well sometimes to enlarge upon it, not so much for sake of argument, but to make the truth of God stand out the more clearly to our minds’ eye. Let us remember, then, that in the three kingdoms God is everywhere. In the kingdoms of nature, of providence, and of grace, we may say of each spot, “Surely God is in this place.”

He is everywhere in the fields of *nature*. Go, if you please, to secluded parts; walk through the forest glades where the virgin moss presents a delicate carpet for human foot; where the deer starts up affrighted by the intrusion of an unexpected visitor; where the wild bird scarcely flies from you because as yet it is not familiar with the cruel face of man. As you walk among the intertwined boughs, the natural arches of God’s own temple which He Himself has built, without toil of hewer of stone or dauber of clay, if you are a true Christian you will be compelled to say—

“The calm retreat, the silent shade,
With prayer and praise agree;
And seem by Your sweet bounty made
For those who follow Thee.”

You will solemnly exclaim, “Surely God is in this place!” Nor will you be alone in your thought, for every waving flower will bear witness to the fact, and the insect humming in the breeze, and the glossy beetle creeping among the dried leaves that lie beneath your feet, relics of many a winter’s slaughter among the verdant groves, and the birds that are warbling among the trees will, every one of them, bear witness that surely God is there. In fact, if there is one spot more than another where the consciousness of God’s presence will strike the heart of the awakened man, it will be where other men are not, but

where he himself is alone the only worshipper of God, except as creation joins in the strain! But you must remember, too, that if you go to the haunt of men, where they crowd and congregate together, that God is there. Go to one of the abutments of London Bridge, and stand a moment gazing at the throng as it hurries by, thousands and tens of thousands in an hour, on, on they sweep—the riches of nations grinding the roadway, and multitudes of men, women, and children wearing away the granite pavement. God is there, though forgotten by most of them who are thinking only of the world, and of its toils, forgetting that there is one above them who looks on all, and one within them who inhabits all space! Let not you and I forget, but let us say, “God is there; in every drop of blood that is circulating through the veins of the throng; in every flush that is on the cheek; in every pulse that throbs, or breath they take.” The very fact that they are fed and clothed, and are in existence will bear witness that surely God is in that place! And thoughts of awe may soon come crowding over your mind, and you may find yourself as much alone with God in crowded Cheapside, or in the thronging Borough, or noisy Whitechapel, as though you were far away alone on the wild prairie, or in some desert of Africa where footprints of man could not be perceived. Verily, God is in this place!

Then, fly with the white sail across the deep, and as you skim the foaming billows, if your soul is right within you, you will say, “Surely God is in this place.” And when the storm comes on, and the thunder rolls like drums in the march of the God of Armies, and the skies seem to be wounded with the flashing of His glittering spear in the tremendous lightning—you may say in the midst of the storm as your boat reels and rocks, and is tossed like a sea bird upon the billow—“Surely He holds the waters in the hollow of His hand, and God is here.” And when you have landed and calm comes on, and the fair

white clouds sail slowly through the air, sailing gallantly in the abated breath of the wind when everything comes out all fresh, and green from the last shower, and there is a clear shining after the rain and the storm, and profound peace after the noisy hurricane, you may say, then, with refreshed enjoyment—“Surely God is in this place.” But I need not continue in such a strain as this. You shall go where you will; you shall look to the most magnificent of God’s works, and you shall say—“God is here, upon your awful summit, O hoary Alp! In your dark bosom, O tempest cloud! And in your angry breath, O devastating hurricane”; “He makes the clouds His chariot and rides upon the wings of the wind.” God is here. And so in the most minute—in the blossom of the apple, in the bloom of the tiny field flower, in the seashell which has been washed up from the deep, in the sparkling of the mineral brought up from darkest mines, in the highest star, or in yonder comet that startles the nations and in its fiery chariot soon drives afar from mortal view—great God, You are here, You are everywhere! From the minute to the magnificent, in the beautiful and in the terrible, in the fleeting and in the lasting, You are here, though sometimes we know it not.

Let us enter now the kingdom of *providence*, again to rejoice that God is there. My brothers and sisters, let us walk the centuries, and at one stride of thought let us traverse the earliest times when man first came out of Eden, driven from it by the fall. Then this earth had no human population, and the wild tribes of animals roamed it at their will. We know not what this island was then, except that we may suspect it to have been covered with dense forests, and perhaps inhabited by ferocious beasts. But God was here, as much here as He is today! As truly was He here then, when no ear heard His footsteps as He walked in the cool of the day in this great garden—as truly here as when today the songs of ten thousand rise up to heaven,

blessing and magnifying His name! And then, when our history began, turn over its pages and you will read of cruel invasions and wars which stained the soil with blood, and crimsoned it a foot deep with clotted gore. You will read of civil wars and strifes between brother and brother, and you will say—“How is this? How was this permitted?” But if you read on and see how by tumult and bloody strife Liberty was served, and the best interest of man, you will say, “Verily, God was here.” History will conduct you to awful battlefields; she will bid you behold the garment rolled in blood; she will cover you with the thick darkness of her fire, and vapor of smoke; and as you hear the clash of arms, and see the bodies of your fellow men, you say, “The devil is here;” but truth will say, “No, though evil is here, yet surely God was in this place though we knew it not. All this was necessary, after all—these calamities are but revolutions of the mighty wheels of providence which are too high to be understood, but are as sure in their action as though we could predict their results.”

Turn, if you will, to what is perhaps a worse feature in history, and far drearier—I mean the story of persecutions. Read how the men of God were stoned and were sawn asunder; let your imaginations revive the burnings of Smithfield, and the old dungeons of the Lollards' Tower. Think how with fire and sword, and instruments of torture the fiends of hell seemed determined to destroy the chosen Seed! But remember as you read the bloodiest tragedy, as your very soul grows sick at some awful picture of poor tortured human flesh, that verily God was in that place, scattering with rough hands, it may be, the eternal seed, bidding persecution to be the blast which carries seed away from some fruit-bearing tree, that it may take root in distant islets which it had never reached unless it had been carried on the wings of the storm! You are, O God, even where man is most in his sin and blasphemy; You are reigning over

rebels themselves, and over those who seem to defy and to overturn Your will! Remember, always, that in history, however dreadful may seem the circumstances of the narrative, surely God is in that place! You may say that yonder nation depended for its welfare upon a woman's will, or that its destiny hinged upon a child's life; that this dynasty rose and fell at the will of some far-famed adventurer; that another nation was rocked to its very center by the fanaticism of a foolish pretender. We will grant you all this, for who denies the second cause when he vindicates the first? But let me say, more present is God than even man himself; more truly is *He* King than the kings of the earth; more certainly is the Lord a man of war than even warriors themselves! In everything in the pages of history, from the moment of its first unrolling till the last of the seven seals shall be loosed, and the book shall be read out before men and angels, you will have to say, "God was in it all." But you will please remember that, while this is true of history in the whole, it is also true of it in the *detail*, and with reference to yourself and your own lot— God is there. You had a fire by which you lost your all, but God was there. By some fortunate circumstances, as you call it, you rose in life—God was there—but by a reverse, as you name it, you soon fell back again—God was there! There has nothing happened to you but what has been under His knowledge, His superintendence, and His *ordination*. Do not; I pray you, forget yourself while you are thinking of nations and of kingdoms, for it is as true of a gnat, that God supports it in life as it is of an angel! And God is as certainly in the creeping of the aphid upon a rosebud as in the tumble of an avalanche from the mountain. He is in all things! He is in *you*! He is in your circumstances today! Take the thought home, and may God grant that it may have its due effect upon your minds. In providence, then, we may say, "Surely God is in this place."

But we now come to the third great kingdom of which the truth holds good in a yet more evident manner—the kingdom of *grace*. In yonder province of conviction, where hard-hearted ones are weeping penitential tears, where proud ones who said they would never have this man to reign over them are bowing their knees to kiss the Son lest He be angry, where rocky, adamantine consciences, have at last begun to feel, where unyielding, determined, incorrigible sinners, have at last turned from the error of their ways—God is there! Were He not there, none of these holy feelings would ever have arisen, and the cry would never have been heard—“I will arise and go unto my Father.” And in yonder province which shines under a brighter sun, where penitents with joy look to a bleeding Savior, where sinners leap to loose their chains, and oppressed ones sing because their burdens have rolled away, where they who were just now sitting in darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death have seen the great light—God is in that place, or faith had never come and hope had never arisen! And there in yonder province, still brighter, where Christians lay their bodies upon the altar as living sacrifices, where men with self-denying zeal think themselves to be nothing, and Christ to be all-in-all; where the missionary leaves his kindred that he may die among the swarthy heathen; where the young man renounces brilliant prospects, that he may be the humble servant of Jesus; where yonder working girl toils night and day to earn her bread rather than sell her soul; where yonder toiling laborer stands up for the rights of conscience against the demands of the mighty; where yonder struggling believer still holds to God in all his troubles, saying—“Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him”—God is in that place, and he who has eyes to see will soon perceive His presence there! Where the sigh is heaving, where the tear is falling, where the song is rising, where the desire is mounting, where love is burning, hope anticipating,

faith abiding, joy overflowing, patience suffering, and zeal abounding, God is surely present! He is present in the temple of the human heart, consecrating it unto Himself. In all these three kingdoms then, my brothers and sisters, let us never forget that “God is in this place.”

I shall turn from this point when I have just made the remark that we are still so apt to think that God is *not here*. You remember that splendid picture which God Himself gives—“Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool.” You have seen, perhaps, the drawings of those wonderful statues which, amid the ruined temples of Egypt, lift their heads into the very clouds. They continually sit upon their awful thrones—men of common stature reach no higher than the pedestals of their feet—while these gigantic ones tower upwards into the very sky! Now consider these to be but a minute representation, and let the colossal figure of Deity rise before your mind. Heaven is His throne and there He sits; earth is His footstool and here are His feet; while higher than angels fly is the head of the All-glorious One! We cannot comprehend the Lord at all, but we may think of Him as He represents Himself to us; He does it, you know, under human representations—let us, then, get the human representation into our mind! He is greater than the greatest thought—His head higher than heaven; His feet lower than the deepest hell; earth is His footstool; heaven His throne. Do not let us think that He is ever absent here, for if His face is seen in heaven, the skirts of His garments are trailing over the whole earth! We are never at a distance from Him; He is here, there, and everywhere; with you and with me, very present at every time, and in every circumstance. I cannot bring out the truth more clearly than that; I therefore leave it to pass on to the second head.

II. BUT HOW ARE WE TO RECOGNIZE THIS PRESENCE OF GOD? What is the Spirit which shall enable us to feel it

constantly? The presence of electricity is very soon discovered by those bodies which are susceptible to its action. The presence, for instance, of iron in a vessel is very soon detected, and discovered by the magnetic needle. There is an affinity between them. That carnal men should not discover God here, I do not wonder. That they should say, “There is no God,” is no marvel, because there is nothing in their nature akin to Him, and therefore, they do not perceive Him. They lack all the affinity that can discover His presence.

To commence, then; if you would feel God's presence, you must have *an affinity to His nature*. Your soul must have the spirit of Adoption, and it will soon find out its Father. Your spirit must have a desire after holiness, and it will soon discover the presence of Him who is holiness itself! Your mind must be heavenly, and you will soon detect that the God of Heaven is here. The more nearly we become like God, the surer shall we see that God is where we are. To a man who has reached the highest stage of sanctification, the presence of God becomes a more sure fact than the presence of anything else! In fact, he may even get to such a state that he will look upon the fields, streets, inhabitants and events of the world as a dream—a passing background—while the only real thing to him will be the unseen God which his new nature so clearly manifests to him! His *faith* becomes the evidence of things not seen, the substance of things which sense cannot perceive. Likeness to God is first necessary for the clear perception of His presence. Next, there must be a *calmness of spirit*. God was in the place when Jacob came there that night, but Jacob did not know it, for he was alarmed about his brother Esau; he was troubled, and vexed, and disturbed. He fell asleep, and his dream calmed him; he awoke refreshed; the noise of his troubled thoughts was gone, and he heard the Voice of God—

“In solemn silence of the mind,
My heaven and there, my God I find.”

We need a quieter, quieter, calmer retirement before we shall well be able, even with spiritual minds, to discover the sensible presence of God.

But next, Jacob had in addition to this calm of mind—a *revelation of Christ*. That Ladder, as I have said in the exposition—was a picture of Christ—the way of access between man and God! You will never perceive God in nature until you have learned to see God in grace. We have heard a great deal about going up from nature to nature's God. Impossible! A man might as well attempt to go from the top of the Alps to heaven! There is still a long gulf between nature and God to the natural mind. You must first of all perceive God Incarnate in the flesh of Christ, before you will perceive God in the creation which He has made. We have heard a great deal about men worshipping in the forest glades, who never frequent the sanctuary of the saints. You have heard much, but there is little truth in it. There is often great sound where there is much emptiness, and you will frequently find that those men who talk most of this natural worship are those who do not worship God at all! God's works are too gross a medium to allow the light, and the road to Him is a rugged one if we go the way of the creatures. But when I see *Christ*, I see God's new and living way, between my soul and my God, most clear and pleasant. I come to my God at once, and finding Him in Christ, I find Him everywhere else besides!

More than this, no man will perceive God, wherever He may be, unless he knows that God has made a *promise* to be with him and is able by faith to look to the fulfillment of it. In Jacob's case, God said, “I will be with you wherever you go, and I will not leave you.” Christian, have you heard the same?

Is the 23rd Psalm the song of your faith? “Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for You are with me.” Have you consciously perceived that though men forsook you, God stood with you? Could you join the song of one who said—

“When trouble like a gloomy cloud
Has gathered thick and thundered loud,
He near my side has always stood,
His loving-kindness O how good!”

Then to you it will not be difficult to perceive the presence of God. You will in fact look upon it as so real that when you open your eyes in the morning, you will look for Him with praise, and when you close them at night, and it will only be that you may repose under the shadow of His wings. I wish we could get back to the spirit of the old Puritans—they believed in a present God always. We speculate about the laws of nature, we are always talking about organic matter and so on, but with them it was God and God alone! We look to the barometer about the rain, and very properly in some sense; they looked to God, and they prayed God either to stop the bottles of heaven, or to pour down the refreshing floods upon the thirsty earth. We are talking about attraction, finding out the laws by which the worlds are governed; the Puritans looked to the Lawgiver rather than to the law, and to the present power of God manifest in His present hand, rather than to any power which some dream may exist in matter itself, or in the laws of matter! Oh, to feel God everywhere, in the little as well as in the great, in our risings up, and in our sittings down, in our goings forth, and in our comings in! I can conceive of no life more blessed, and of no spirit more akin to the spirit of the glorified, than the

mind and heart of the man who lives in God, and knows and feels that God is ever present with him!

III. This brings me, very briefly, to one or two concluding remarks upon the **PRACTICAL RESULTS OF A FULL RECOGNITION IN THE SOUL OF THIS DOCTRINE OF GOD'S OMNIPRESENCE.**

One of the first things would be to check our inordinate levity. Cheerfulness is a virtue—levity a vice. How much foolish talking—how much jesting which is not convenient—would at once end if we said, “Surely God is in this place.” The next time you have been indulging in mirth—I mean not innocent mirth, but that which is connected with uncleanness, or with any sort of ill—think you see a finger lifted up, and you hear a voice saying, “Surely God is in this place.” Let your recreation be free from sin; let your amusements be such that you can enjoy them while God looks on! If, too, we felt that God was in this place, how much more often would we talk of Him and of Christ? This afternoon, what will many of you talk of? Sunday afternoon talk is generally a great difficulty to some professors. They do not like to go right down into what they think a worldly conversation, so they generally talk about ministers. They consider *that* to be a spiritual subject; and generally this talk about ministers is wickedder than talk about the devil himself! I had rather you speak religiously concerning Satan, than irreligiously concerning the angels of the Churches. There is one tale about this minister, and another tale about the other, and the conversation ministers no edification! If they heard an angel say, “God is in this place,” the afternoon of the day of rest would be spent in much more profitable conversation. But suppose that I have some here, today, who have been lately exposed to personal danger and peril? brothers and sisters, do you not think if in the midst of the storm, or in time of disease, you had heard a voice saying, “Surely God is in

this place,” you would have been perfectly at rest? The noxious air grows pure if He is there! The lightning cannot scathe, or if they scathe ‘tis bliss! The storm cannot devour, nor can the hungry deep engulf—or, if they do, ‘tis bliss if God is there! What need have you at any time to fear? What is your nervousness but wickedness, when the Eternal God is your certain refuge? A Christian alarmed at weapons in the hand of his God—surely he distrusts his Father, and doubts the heart of infinite love! “God is in this place though I knew it not.” I speak to some, too, who are in great poverty. You will go home today, and there are bare walls. Perhaps the seat you sit upon has many of the rushes torn away and the table will be but very scantily furnished, and very homely at the best. “Well,” but you will say, “surely God is in this place!” What comfort for you! You may remember the old Christian’s exclamation as you sit down for a blessing, “What? All this, and my God present with me!” Better this and feel His presence than be possessed of the best of the world’s dainties, and not know that He is here! Perhaps you have today some sore trouble at home. There is a Christian wife who has to go home to an ungodly husband, or sons and daughters who have to go home to a household which is anything but what it should be. Do not be afraid to go home, and as you cross the threshold, say, “Surely God is in this place.” I think as John Bunyan passed over the threshold of the dungeon of Ledford Jail, if he could have known that he would be there 12 years, but that in those 12 years he would write the “Pilgrim’s Progress,” he would have said, “Surely God is in this place.” And you, if you are called to enter a den such as Bunyan called his dungeon—you, too, can say, “Surely God is in this place”—and you can make it a palace at once! Some of you, too, are in very deep affliction. You are driven to such straits that you do not know where things will end, and you are in great despondency today. Surely God is in that place! As certain

as there was one like unto the Son of God in the midst of the fiery furnace with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, so surely on the glowing coals of your affliction the heavenly footprints may be seen—for surely God is in this place! You are called today to some extraordinary duty, and you do not feel strong enough for it. Go to it, for, “Surely God is in this place.” You have to address an assembly this afternoon for the first time. Surely God is in that place! He will help you. The arm will not be far off on which you have to lean; the divine strength will not be remote to which you have to look. “Surely God is in this place.”

But were I to multiply pictures, I might not describe the condition of one-tenth of my hearers. Let me rather leave it to you or to the blessed Spirit of God to make an application to your own lot, and you shall find this to be a very well of comfort springing up with clear transparent water of life, “Surely God is in this place.”

And lastly, if we always remembered that God was where we are, what reverence it would inspire when we are in His house, in the place particularly and specially set apart for His service! I do not think we always feel in the assembly of the saints as we should. It is not the *place* that is holy—holiness cannot attach itself to anything but moral virtues, and to intelligent beings. There cannot be holy bricks and holy stones—the thing is absolutely impossible! But where two or three are met together in Christ's name, there is He in the midst of them! He is here and yet how many come out of form and fashion. Some few think rather more of the dress they come in, than they do of what they shall hear, or of what Spirit they shall come in. Oh, be dressed—stay not for another pin, but stay for another prayer if you will—that your *soul* may be dressed! Often you come with your body decked out, but with your soul naked before God for lack of preparation in coming to His house.

And when we sit here, what thoughts come in! What buyers and sellers transact business here! How have some of you been looking to the cares of housewives, and some of you been busy with your shops! At home you do not take the shutters down on the Sunday—you keep them up! I wish you would keep them up in your souls. You do not go into the field, and look after the crops, but some men bring the crops into the house of God and look at them there! You would not take down the ledger, and cast up your accounts today, (though some do that), but at the same time, you have a ledger in your brains, and are busy with that when you ought to be thinking of your God! And I have noticed this, too, that in so large a house as this, where so many have to be occupied in showing persons to their seats, keeping the pews, and arranging the services, there is such a tendency in the minds of such to have their minds dissipated from the solemn occupation in which they are engaged. I think there ought never to be employed in churches and chapels pewopeners who are not converted, for they will not be converted afterwards. I suppose the case of a pewopener being converted after taking the office was never known. Those persons, who have to do with the externals of the house, are just those persons who seldom know anything of the internal. They are occupied with the shell. They cannot think of the kernel. As with the grave digger and with undertakers' men, the least thoughtful of all, the most careless of all men, so is it with them who are most in the sanctuary— they are often furthest from God. Oh, may we remember, “Surely God is in this place,” and it will give us awe when we come into His immediate presence!

But once more, what a restraint from sin would this thought be if it could be painted upon our very soul! A man once took his child with him while he went out to steal from a neighbor's stack, and he said to the boy, “Look about you for

fear anybody should see your father.” The boy had read the Scriptures, so, having looked all around, his father said, “Have you looked all ways?” He said, “No, Father, there is somebody looking.” “Who is it?” “Father, you have not looked up, and there is God looking down upon you.” The man’s conscience was pricked. Sinner, look around you! There is no one in the chamber, you perpetrate the crime. Look up! The father with murderous thoughts in his mind gets his son into an unfrequented lane, no eye he thinks beholds him, but the divine watcher looks on, and finds helpmates on earth to keep watch, too. Man, there are eyes in every wall! Nature is God’s great photographer, photographing every act you do, no, every *thought* that you feel as it prints itself upon your brain and upon your brow! You shall find at the last great day the picture of everything that you have done preserved—for He shall speak to the beam out of the wall, and it shall tell what you said—and He shall speak to the sun itself, and it shall reveal the picture of the uplifted hand, and of the dark deed. You are always seen! Eyes watch you—through the thick darkness He beholds you. The spirits which He sends abroad to and fro are always at your elbow, and He Himself is there! Now go and sin in the presence of God if you dare! Curse Him to His face if you dare! Go home today to break His Sabbath if you dare while He looks on! Surely men would not offend in the very presence of the Judge! They would not break the laws with the Lawgiver Himself before their very eyes! Let Him then abide in your thoughts—

“Nor let your weaker passions dare
Consent to sin, for God is there.”

402 THE JOINT-HEIRS AND THEIR DIVINE PORTION – ROM. 8:17

**A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Morning, July 28th, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

“Joint-heirs with Christ.” — Romans 8:17

THE APOSTLE has proceeded through a simple, but exceedingly forcible, train of reasoning till he gains this glorious point—“joint-heirs with Christ.” He begins thus—“You have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” This is a fact which he takes for granted, because he has perceived it in the hearts of believers. We do cry, “Abba, Father.” From this he infers that if God has given us the Spirit whereby we call Him, “Father,” then we are His children. Then, he adds—“If children then heirs”—though this does not hold true in all families, because all children are not heirs. Frequently the first-born may take all the estate, but with God, as long as they are children, they have equal rights. “If children then heirs.” He goes on to say, “Heirs of God;” for if they are heirs, they inherit their Father’s property. God is their Father; they are therefore God’s heirs! Well, but, God has another Son, one who is the first-born of every creature. Exactly so; therefore if we are heirs, as Christ Jesus is the heir of all things, we are “joint-heirs with Christ.” I think you will see that, like links in

a chain, these different truths of God draw on each other—the spirit of adoption proves the *fact* of adoption; by the act of adoption we are children; if children, then heirs; if heirs, heirs of God; but, since there is another Heir, we must therefore be joint-heirs with Christ Jesus. Blessed is the man to whom this reasoning is not abstract, but experimental! Happy is he who can follow the apostle step by step, and say, “Yes, I have this morning the spirit of a son; I know that my heart loves God, and I look to Him as my Father, with trust, with confidence, and with love. Then, I am surely His son, because I have the Spirit of a son; then I am His heir; I am the heir of God; and thus, my faith lays hold upon the thrice-precious words of this glorious text—‘I am joint-heir with Christ.’”

I would invite you, my brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, this morning, to do three things. First, let us consider *the terms of the covenant or will*—“joint-heirs with Christ.” Secondly, let us go forth and *view the estates*—what it is of which we are joint-heirs. And when we have done so, let us proceed at once *to administer*, for God has made His children administrators as well as heirs.

I. First, then, there is **A LEGAL TERM IN THE WILL UPON WHICH THE WHOLE MATTER WILL HINGE**. We are called “joint-heirs with Christ”—what does this mean?

1. It means, first of all, that *our right to the divine heritage stands or falls with Christ's right to the same inheritance*. We are co-heirs; if He is truly an heir, so are we; and if He is not, neither are we. Our two interests are intertwined and made one, we have neither of us any heirship apart from the other. We are joint-heirs, Christ jointly with us; ourselves jointly with Christ. So it follows that if there is any *flaw in the covenant, or will*, to render it not valid if it is not rightly signed, sealed and delivered—then, it is no more valid for Christ than it is for us! If there are some points in the covenant of grace where wisdom has been

deficient, and therefore by error it may miscarry, or by lack of legal right may prove null and void, it is as surely null towards Christ as towards us, for He is jointly concerned therein. If according to Law, *we* are only heirs-presumptive, whose rights may be superseded, then, our great joint-heir, so far as He is co-heir with us, is superseded also! If it is possible that by some decree in heaven's high court, it should be certified and determined that the inheritance is not rightly ours, —because any part of the covenant was left in a precarious state, so that it became void and of no effect, then Your inheritance, O You King of kings, has failed You in the very day when it has failed us! I trust you will lay hold upon that thought; if Christ as God's heir has a perfect right to what His Father has bestowed upon Him, even so have we, for our rights are co-existent. If our title is true and just, so is His, and if His rights of heritage are true and just, so are ours. Oh, blessed thought for the believer! *Jesus* must lose the reward of His agonies before *we* can lose the fruits of them! Jesus the mediator must lose the glory which His finished work has procured for Him, before one of His co-heirs can miss it! He must come down from that glory which He now inhabits, and cease to be honored as "The Lamb who was slain, and has redeemed us unto God by His blood," if any one of His people shall be deprived of that glory and be cast into hell. The will, if valid for one, is valid for all!

But, perhaps, there may be a *lawsuit* made against the will. Some antagonist may set up a counterclaim; an enemy to the entire family may proceed at once to attack the will with venom and with malice; he may take it into the heavenly Court of Chancery and there, before the great Judge, the question may be tried as to whether the inheritance is legally and lawfully ours. Very well, be it so; but then, it is Christ's interest that is at stake as well as mine; He will be co-respondent in the suit. When Satan stood forth to accuse Joshua, the high priest, he did in

effect accuse Christ as well as that chosen disciple and the Lord was not slow to put in His rejoinder to the objection—“The Lord rebuke you, O Satan, even the Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you; is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?” If Satan brings an accusation before God against any of the Lord’s redeemed, that accusation is made against the Redeemer Himself, for God’s people are so one with Christ, that you must first bring the charge against Christ Himself, before you dare to lay it against any of His elect! Do not say you can charge the members with sin; you may do so in the inferior courts of earth, but the bill will be ignored in the supreme court of heaven, since before that bar the accepted substitute appears to answer all demands. You must enter your suit against the Head, if you would attack the members, for verily, the action at law which can be pleaded against the member of the body, must be pleaded against the Head itself, for no court can allow a distinction between the body and the head in any motion at law. If it is possible that the malice and the graft of hell could invent some scheme by which the covenant could be put out of court, and the promise of grace could be made to fail, then Christ fails with His people, and the heir of all things loses His inheritance as soon as one single one of the other heirs shall have his right to the inheritance disproved! Our rights are joint-rights, and must be either jointly acknowledged or jointly denied. “We are joint-heirs with Christ.”

Yet further, to illustrate the full meaning of the joint-heirship—suppose, after the *via* had been proved and acknowledged to be right, it shall be found in winding up the affairs of the testator, that *nothing is left to distribute*. Suppose, after all this boast and talk about being heirs, the property should be nil, or there should even be found a debt against the estate—what then? Why, my brethren, if *we* get nothing, *Christ*

gets nothing. If there should be no heaven for us, there is no heaven for Christ. If there should be no thrones for us, there would be no throne for Him. If the promise should utterly fail of fulfillment to the least of the joint-heritors, it must also fail of accomplishment to our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Be the property much or little, we are co-heirs. If there are infinite treasures, Christ has them and we have them. But, if there is no treasure whatever and faith should end in disappointment and hope in despair—the calamity which impoverishes us, must also impoverish our great co-heir. When we are poor and in eternity have no shelter, when we in the next world shall find no heaven and no bliss—then, wandering as outcast orphans—we shall see our Elder Brother an outcast orphan, too. If we have no portion and are penniless, the First-born among many brethren must be portionless and penniless also, for with Him we stand or we fall.

And then, suppose that, in winding up the estates, it should be found that, though there is something left, yet it is a *mere trifle*, scarcely worth an acknowledgment; enough to excite appetite, but not sufficient to satisfy it—what if it should come out that heaven is not the infinite joy we have been taught to expect? Suppose its bliss should be but inferior joy, such as might be found even in this world below—suppose that the harps have no melody, the crowns but little glory, and heaven's streets but slight magnificence—what then? What they are to us, they are to our co-heir. Saints with little glory, then Christ with little glory! Believers with a narrow heaven, then Christ with a narrow heaven! If they drink but little from the river of pleasure, His draughts must be shallow, too, for their joy is His joy, and His glory He has given them. He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied, and you who long for His appearing shall be satisfied, also, when you wake up in His likeness!

I have been dwelling upon the black side in order to bring the bright one out by contrast. We are joint-heirs. So you see, if there is any flaw, if there is any action to set aside the will, or if there is found no effects, or if the effects are slender, the loss falls upon the co-heirs. Not on one alone, nor on the other alone, but on the two, since they are jointly designated heirs in the will, and they are only heirs as they stand in relationship with one another. But oh, my brothers and sisters let us revel with delight for a moment in the contrast which I might present to you. There is no flaw in God's will with regard to Christ. The heathen may rage, and the kings of the earth take counsel together, but God says, "I will declare the decree, yet have I set My Son upon My holy hill of Zion." There is no fear whatever that, by any accident or by mistake, Christ should miss the honor to which His Father has ordained Him! He must be with His Father where He is—where we will be, if we are heirs of God! Thus runs the decree and thus shall the fulfillment follow—"I will that they, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am." No lawsuit can stand against Christ! It were idle to dream it for a moment; He has satisfied God's Law, magnified it, and made it honorable; He has discharged all the debts which as surety He took upon Himself. Who shall accuse the Redeemer? Who shall lay anything to the charge of Him who rose again from the dead? Nor can any creature accuse His saints, nor can heaven, or earth, or hell disprove our rights or infringe upon our title, so long as *His* title stands undisputed and indisputable! We *shall* see His face! The devils in hell cannot hinder it! We *shall* possess the promised rest; all the fiends that are beneath shall not rob us of the heirloom. And, believer, there is no fear that Christ shall be the possessor of nothing, or heir of little things. He is the Son of God, the infinitely rich, and God will not give to His Son a petty dowry or a trifling portion. "Ask of Me," He says, and He gives Him unlimited

permission to ask—not as Herod who would give only the half of his kingdom—but as one who would give *everything* to His Son whom He has appointed heir of all things, and by whom He made the worlds. And O my soul, your portion cannot be slender, nor your dowry narrow, since it is the same inheritance which Christ has from His Father's hands! Weigh the riches of Christ in scales, and His treasures in balances, and then think to count the treasures which belong to the saints! Reach the bottom of Christ's sea of joy, and then hope to understand the bliss which God has prepared for them who love Him! Leap over the boundaries of Christ's possession if you can—and then dream of ending a limit to the possessions of the elect of God. "All things are yours, for you are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

2. There is another point under the first head which I must not omit. Then, it appears if we are called joint-heirs with Christ, *we legally and strictly have no inheritance apart from Him*. Soul, this suggests to you a solemn inquiry, "Are you in Christ or not?" Think not that you can ever be a partaker of the fullness of God unless you are in Christ—with Him vitally and personally, one. One of two joint-heirs has no right apart from the other. The signature of the one will not avail to alienate the estate; nor can one sell it by his own right, nor have it all at his own separate disposal, or in his own sole possession or holding. He has, in fact, no right at all—except as he has in connection with his co-heir! Consider this, believer. You have no right to heaven in yourself! Your right lies in Christ. If you are pardoned, it is through *His* blood! If you are justified, it is through *His* righteousness! If you are sanctified, it is because *He* is made of God unto you, sanctification! If you are taught in the ways of God, it is because He becomes your wisdom! If you shall be kept from falling, it will be because you are preserved in Christ Jesus, and if you are perfected, it is because you are complete

in *Him*! And if you are at last glorified, it will be because God the Father has glorified His Son Jesus! The promises are yes and amen to you—but only in Christ Jesus—in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will. Make sure, then, that you are in *union* with Christ—for out of Him you have no rights whatever!

3. The title of joint-heir contains another mystery which I cannot withhold, although, it must be judiciously handled—*Christ, as co-heir, has (of His own free grace) so identified Himself with what His rights as co-heir are, they are not to be separated or viewed apart from ours.* As God, by His own right, the Lord Jesus is possessor of all things since He made and supports all things. But as Jesus, the mediator, the federal head of the covenant of grace, He has no rights apart from His people. See, brothers and sisters, He enters into glory, but not for Himself alone, for it is written, “Where the forerunner is *for us* entered” (Heb 6:20). Does He stand in the presence of God? He appears in the presence of God *for us*—Hebrews 9:24. Adam’s death was not simply his own private loss, for in Adam all died. And Christ’s life, and all the consequences of His obedience are not merely His own, but the joint riches of all who are in Him, of whom He is the federal head and on whose behalf He accomplished the divine will. When Christ gave Himself for us, He gave us all the rights and privileges which went with Himself, so that now He has, *as our brother*, no heritage apart from us, although as Eternal God, He has essential rights to which no creature may venture to pretend.

Yet one more remark before we leave this point. While dwelling upon this joint-heirship, let us remark *what an honor is conferred upon us.* To have anything to do with a great man is thought by some persons to be a distinguished mark of honor. To be set down in a will as co-heir with some great prince or

noble would be considered indeed a great thing. But, what honor is conferred on you, believer, to be joint-heir with the King of kings, the Wonderful, the Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace? You came here today from your toil, and your bones have scarcely forgotten yesterday's weariness. But, you are co-heir with Him who rules all heaven! You come here in poverty, and you will go home to a scant meal in a narrow room—but, you are co-heir with Him who made the worlds—by whom all things consist! You have come here weak and feeble, doubting, distrustful and cast down, but I tell you, weak though you are, and in your own judgment less than the least of all, yet the same hand that wrote Christ heir of all things wrote your name with His! And till a hand can be found that can blot out your Redeemer's name, yours shall stand and abide forever and ever! Come, lift up your head; envy no man his dukedom; think no man's princship worth your coveting; you are greater than the greatest, for you are joint-heir with Christ! In dignified relationships you have no superior upon earth! And except those who are joint-heirs with you, you have not an equal, since you are joint-heir with Christ! And will you think, yet again, *what cause there is that you should realize today your union with Christ*, since you are joint-heir with Him? Soul, you are linked with Christ in the Eternal business of the Eternal Father! When He decreed Christ to be blessed above all the blessed, He decreed you to be a partaker with Him! Christ was always considered as having *you in Him*, and you were always considered by God as being in Christ! I pray you consider *yourself* as being in Christ. Look today upon your own being, not as a stray spark, but as a portion of Christ's fire! Not as a solitary drop, but as a part of that deep sea of love which we call Christ Jesus! Think of yourself, now, not as a man or separate individual, but as a member of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones! These are blessed subjects, though I cannot speak

upon them as I would. I always find when I have to deal with these “fat things full of marrow,” that words fail me. And, perhaps it is well, for then, the excellence of the power is proved to be not by words of man, but in the weight and fullness, and richness of gospel matter! Joint-heirs with Christ Jesus! I defy you to exhaust that topic though you should think about it all the days of the next week. No, though you should muse upon it till eternity commences with your soul!

II. IN VIEWING THE ESTATES, we must remark that to our present apprehension they are divided into two parts. The first part of the inheritance is one which flesh and blood would desire to do without—it is the *inheritance of suffering*. When Christ was God's heir, and was here on earth, He was heir of the cross, heir of shame and spitting and cruel mocking and scourging. If we are joint-heirs with Him, we, too, must partake of the same! Come with me, believer, to your estates and behold, just on the edge of your Father's great inheritance, lies the swamp and marshland of *affliction*. Now this is yours. If this is not yours—neither are the rest, for they are in the same indenture, and they are bequeathed to you in the same will. The same legacy that left peace with you also left tribulation with you, while you are in this world. Come now, though this be an exceedingly disagreeable spot, though it is a piece of ground which you would prefer be left out and given to your enemies—yet there is a possibility of getting great treasure and great riches out of it! Therefore do not scorn it. But, if you do scorn it, remember, you scorn the rest of the inheritance, for they are all one and indivisible in your Father's will. Christ's cross is entailed on all heirs of God! Will you take the cross? What? Do your shoulders forbid, and refuse themselves the pain of bearing it? Then, remember, your head must deny itself the pleasure of wearing the crown. No cross, no crown! If you are joint-heir, and would claim one part of the estate, you must

take the rest. Are you ready to throw up your own claim and say, “I will not be heir of anything”? Be it so, then! But until you are, you must be ready to suffer in this world the afflictions of the chosen ones—for they are a part of the inheritance. And remember, Christ is co-heir with you in this. “In all their afflictions He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them.”

Added to this, you must also be the heir of *persecution*. Christ had to be persecuted, and so must you. If you, for fear of shame, and out of the love of the flesh, will not follow Christ through an evil generation—neither shall you follow Him when He marches through the streets of heaven in triumph— amidst the acclamations of angels! You must endure persecution. But then, remember He will be Joint- Heir with you! “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?” “He had not persecuted Christ,” you say, “it was only some poor men and women that he had hauled to prison, or scourged in the synagogue, to compel them to blaspheme.” Yes, but Christ was co-heir with them—and when Saul persecuted the poor servants of Jesus—he persecuted the Master, too! Will you suffer with *Him*? Will you be scoffed at for *His* sake? Will you be willing to endure the reviling of slanderous tongues? If not, inasmuch as you reject one part of the inheritance, you reject the rest! There is a third black portion, too, namely, *temptation*. You must be tempted of Satan. You must be tried by the world, the flesh, the devil. Do you shrink from it? Do you say, “I will not be a Christian, if I must always be on my guard, and always fighting against temptation from without and from within”? Remember, in this, too, Christ is your co-heir. “He was tempted in all points like as we are.” “We have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities.” Do you shrink from being tempted? Would you take Job’s jewels, but not his dunghill? Would you have David’s crown, but not his caves of Adullam

and rocks of the wild goats? Would you have your Master's throne, but not His temptation in the wilderness? Then, remember, it cannot be! When you refuse the one, you relinquish all claims to the other! The co-heir is heir to the entire estate, and if he says, "No, not to that portion," then, he is not heir to any! And if he makes exemption anywhere, he makes exemption to the whole. The joint-heirship reaches from the gloomy patina of deep affliction, up to the bright ineffable splendor of the throne of bliss, nor can any man reverse the record. "If so be that we suffer with Him, we shall also be glorified together."

Now, let us march with joyful footsteps onward to the other part of the inheritance. As this is a legal question, and as in matters of wills everything should be proven and sworn to, let us have, concerning our inheritance, the evidence of God—who cannot lie. Now, first, brothers and sisters, as co-heirs with Christ we are *heirs of God*—so the text tells us. Oh, who can tell what God is? The finite cannot grasp the infinite. We, who are but babes, cannot hold the great ocean of Godhead in our infantile palms. We know not what God is, nor the measure of His attributes. But, remember, the text tells us that all God is, is ours. Is He omnipotent? Your omnipotence is ours, O God, to be our defense. Is He omniscient? Your infinite wisdom, O God, is mine to guide me. Is He eternal? Your eternity, O God, is mine to keep me in existence, that I may always be preserved. Is He full of love and grace? Then all Your love, as though there were not another to be loved, is mine, O God! And all Your grace, as though there were never another sinner to partake of it, is mine! "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup"—Psalm 16:5. "God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever"—Psalm 73:26. Take another passage. Turn to Romans, the 4th chapter, 13th verse and you will find that there, the promise that was made to the

Seed was that he should be *heir of the world*. “Ask of Me,” said His Father, “and I will give you the heathen for Your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession.” “This world is ours,” says the apostle in another place, and ours because it is Christ’s by right of inheritance! There is nothing here below which does not belong to a believer. If he has wealth, let him use it in his Master’s service, for it is *His*. If he has poverty, it is better for him, for poverty is his to help him to be sanctified, and to long for heaven! Whatever happens to him—sickness or health, adversity or prosperity—everything is *his* here below. You may walk the broad acres of this round globe and never look upon a single spot that is not yours! You may cast your eyes to the remotest star, or send your thoughts beyond into the untraversed leagues of space—but, look where you will—as all is Christ’s—so all is yours! You have not come of age, so you do not possess it yet—but, the day shall come when Christ shall come to this earth, and take possession of it, and then His saints shall reign with Him. “The meek shall inherit the earth, and delight themselves with the abundance of peace.”

In Hebrews 1:2 we are told that God has appointed Christ *heir of all things*. Then *we* are heirs of all things—heaven and earth—time and eternity, anything that you can conceive of—the things that can be named and cannot be named, things conceivable and inconceivable, finite and infinite, human and divine. Christ’s property extends to all and we are co-heirs. Therefore our rights and our property extend to all things whatever they may be! “For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and you are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s.” Then, in James 2:5 we are spoken of as being *heirs of the kingdom*. Christ has a kingdom that shall never be moved. He rules over all. Does He call Himself a King? He

has made us kings! Is Christ a Priest? We are priests unto our God! Does He sit upon a throne? We shall overcome and sit down with Him upon His throne! Will He judge the nations? Know you not that the saints shall judge the world? Will He be received with triumph by His Father? So shall we when His Father shall say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Will He be ruler over many things? So shall we be when He shall say unto us, “Enter you into the joy of your Lord.” Has He joy? We shall have joy, too, for we shall have *His* joy! Is He glorious? So must we be, for we shall be made like He. Is He everlasting? So shall we be, for because He lives, we shall live also. Brethren, I pray you, if your thoughts now can bring themselves to the matter—gather up all the honors, glories, treasures, riches that your thoughts have ever conceived as belonging to Christ—and while the hymn is ringing in your ear—“Crown Him, crown Him, crown Him, Lord of all”—remember that *you* are co-heirs with Him! Oh, it is a glorious truth! Oratory may stand back and eloquence may hold her tongue. The doctrine must be stated in its naked truth. She is, “when unadorned, adorned the most.” This glorious truth is most sweet when earth’s honeyed words are taken away and most lustrous when we no longer attempt to illuminate her with human language. **WE ARE HEIRS WITH CHRIST!** All that He *has*, all that He *is*, therefore, *belongs to us!*

III. Now, thirdly, and this is the practical part of the discourse, let us proceed to **ADMINISTER TO THE EFFECTS.** How can we do that, you ask? Well, in the first place, there is one part of the property which we may enjoy at once. Behold, I present to you the fair cross of your once crucified Elder Brother! When you came here this morning you were troubled, and as you came in you were envying your neighbor. You were saying of such-and-such an ungodly person, “Everything seems to go well with him; but as for me, all the day long am I plagued

and chastened every morning.” You were murmuring at the dispensations of God! Now, you have heard your Father’s will read, and you find that you are joint-heirs with Christ. You discover that Christ had His cross, and you are asked to administer to the will. Come, take your cross up and bear it with joy! You will have to carry it. Whether you take it up or not, your murmuring will not lighten your afflictions. You can make your wooden cross into an iron one if you choose, by being of a fretful disposition. Resignation to God’s will, takes the weight out of the cross—but, a proud spirit that will not bow to God’s will changes a wooden cross into an iron one! Now which shall it be? You must be chastened, you must feel the goad—will you kick against the pricks, and so wound yourself more than you would have been by the goad itself? Why will you inflict more sorrow on yourself than God charges? Be patient, and you will only feel the rod as it is in God’s hands. But, when you are impatient and clutch at the rod, you bring it down with the weight of God’s hand and your own hand, too! Now be quiet; not only be quiet, but be glad. Say, “I count it to be my joy to be permitted to be a partaker of the sufferings of Christ. I will count it to be my highest glory if I may be made a knight of the cross, and may carry that cross upon my shoulder—to the world a badge of dishonor—but to me the ensign of glory, the badge of honor!” I cannot, of course, picture what your precise trouble is. Some of you have a trouble, perhaps, in her who is dearest to you. Others of you have affliction in your children. Many of you are tried in your business, and some of you in your bodies with chronic or acute diseases. I know you all have a cross, or if you have not, I hope you will soon have one, for where there is no cross, there is no Christ. The cross and Christ are nailed together by four nails, and they will never be disassociated in the experience of any Christian. All the sheep of the Great Shepherd are marked with the cross—and this not

only in the fleece—but in the flesh. “If you are without chastisement whereof all are partakers, then are you bastards, and not sons.” Now, I say begin at once to administer, by shouldering the cross and bearing your troubles, and your persecutions with patience and with joy!

But next—why cannot we administer also to the blessed part of the glorious testament? Brothers and sisters, faith can do wonders! While sense is groveling down below, faith with eagle wings cuts through the clouds and mounts to heaven! If you have faith enough, brothers and sisters, you may this morning be raised up to sit together in heavenly places with Christ Jesus. Come, faith, and help me now to lay my fingers among the strings of the golden harp! Yes, that harp is mine, and my soul, by faith, would make every string resound with melody! Glory be unto You, O God, glory be unto You; my soul is in heaven; I with the cherubim and seraphim would bow and sing and rejoice! With them I veil my face in this most joyful moment, wiping every tear from my poor eyes. I bid them look upon Your glory in Christ. My soul would even now take her seat upon the throne; where my treasure is, there shall my heart be also—

“Even now I will adore Him
With the glorious hosts above!
Who forever bow before Him,
And unceasing sing His love!
I will begin the music here.
And so my soul shall rise;
Oh, for some heavenly note to bear
My passions to the skies!
Even now by faith I join my hands
With those who went before.
All hail, you blood-sprinkled bands

Upon the eternal shore!”

Oh, holy Immanuel, exalted as You are, Your co-heirs here below being by faith to partake of Your glory! I think my head wears the crown. The white robe is girt about me, and my feet tread no more the battlefields, but the streets of peaceful bliss! Jerusalem, my spirit is come to you, and unto your glorious assembly. O you first-born whose names are written in heaven, I take my seat with you, and join your rapturous adoration! O God, Judge of all, my spirit meets You robed in my Savior’s righteousness, and salutes You as my Father, and my all! O eternity, eternity, eternity—time is gone, and change is over, and I am floating on your pacific waves where winds can never howl, and tempests never lower. My soul has made me like the chariots of Amminadib, and I have come to the hills of myrrh and the mountains of frankincense!

Last of all, I have another practical point. God has given Christ the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost ends of the earth for His possession, and we are co-heirs with Him. Brothers and sisters let us advance to take the property! But how? Why, some of you can do so by preaching the gospel to poor sinners in the streets! Others, this afternoon, by teaching your children in the classroom! You can say, “God has given these souls to Christ, I am going to take them in Christ’s name.” Others of you, who can do little yourselves, can this day assist by sending forth men of God to preach the gospel of Christ. Germany belongs not to the cloudy philosopher, but to Christ! Holland, Belgium, Russia, and Poland belong not to their kings and czars—Christ is the King of kings—these lands belong to us! Go up! Take them! Say not, “There are giants in the land”—you are strong enough to smite them! Say not, “Lutheranism and Popery are mighty.” So they are—but He who is with you is far mightier! As Jonathan of old, with his armor-bearer,

climbed up the steep place in the cleft of the rock, and began to mow down his enemies— so, believer, alone, or with your friend—as God has called you, climb up—for verily, the possession is yours, and you may take it! All that the Church needs today is courage and devotion. Let but the Church know her rights and claim them; let her cease to assimilate herself to the sons of earth. Let her cease from her accursed fornication with the state, and she shall become the pure, chaste bride of Christ! Let her, then, as Christ's queen, claim the earth as hers, and send her heralds forth from sea to sea, to bid all men bow before Him and confess Him to be their King! God's power will be with her heralds. God's might shall be with her armies, and the earth shall soon submit—and Christ shall reign forever and ever! “Say to the North, give up, and to the South, keep not back; bring my sons from afar, and my daughters from the ends of the earth.” Say it, Christians; say it this morning! Say it by your prayer, your deeds, your constant energy; say it by your benefactions. Demand the earth for Christ; demand it for yourselves— for you are “joint-heirs with Christ.”

I pray you take the possession now. Poor prodigal sinner, may our Father bring you home, for there is an inheritance even for *you*. “Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved.

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A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Morning, August 4th, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“And another also said, Lord, I will follow You; but...” —
Luke 9:61

WHEN YOU HAVE WALKED through a cemetery, you have frequently seen over a grave a broken column, intended to memorialize the death of someone who was taken away in the prime of manhood— before his life had reached its prime. I shall take that picture of the broken column to represent my text. It is a broken text. You expected me to go on and to conclude the sentence—I have broken it off abruptly. That broken column shall also represent the broken resolutions of many who were once in a hopeful state. As if prepared to witness a good profession, they said, “Lord, I will follow You.” But when there came a heavy blow from the withering hand of sin, the column was broken short with a “but.” So let my text stand. I will not finish it. But so let not your determination stand! The Lord grant by His effectual grace that, while you mourn with sincere grief the grave of many a fair resolve which never attained the maturity of true discipleship—cut off with the fatal “*but*” of indecision, you may now be quickened to newness of life. Thus, you shall come to the fullness of the stature of a man in Christ. Thus, as a building fitly framed

together and growing to completeness, you shall be made meet for a habitation of God through the Spirit.

“Lord, I will follow You; but...” How remarkably does Scripture prove to us that the mental characteristics of mankind are the same now as in the Savior’s day! We occasionally hear stories of old skeletons being dug up which are greater in stature than men of these times. Some credit the story, some do not, for there are many who maintain that the physical conformation of man is at this day just what it always was. Certainly, however, there can be no dispute whatever among observant men as to the identity of the *inner nature* of man! The gospel of Christ may well be an unchanging gospel, for it is a remedy which has to deal with an unfaltering disease. The very same objections which were made to Christ in the days of His flesh are made to His gospel now! The same effects are produced under the ministry of Christ’s servants in these modern times as were produced by His ministry. The promised hopes which make glad the preacher’s heart are still blasted and withered by the same blights, and the same mildews which of old withered and blasted the prospects of the ministry during our Lord’s own personal sojourn in the world! Oh, what hundreds, no, what *myriads* of persons have we whose consciences are awakened, whose judgments are a little enlightened, and yet, they vacillate—they live and die unchanged! Like Reuben, “unstable as water, they do not excel.” They would follow Christ, *but* something lies in the way; they would join with Him in this generation, *but* some difficulty suggests itself; they would enter the kingdom of heaven, *but* there is a lion in the street. They lie in the bed of the sluggard instead of rising up with vigor and striving to enter in at the strait gate! May the Holy Spirit in all the plenitude of His power be with us this morning, so that while I shall deal with the character indicated by the text, *He* may deal with the conscience

of those assembled! I can merely attempt what He can effectually perform. I can but speak the words; it is for Him to draw the bow, fit the arrow to the string, and send it home between the joints of the harness. May some who have been in the state of those described by the text be brought today to solemn consideration, and to a serious decision through the Holy Spirit of God!

Three things we would labor to do. First of all, let us endeavor to *expose your excuses*, “Lord, I will follow You; but...” Secondly, I will try to *expose the ignorance which lies at the bottom of the objection* which you offer. Then thirdly, in the most solemn manner would I endeavor to bring before your mind’s eye, O you who vacillate like Felix, *your sin and your danger*, that your “*buts*” may now be put away—that your profession may be made with unfaltering tongue—that you may henceforth, in very deed, follow Christ wherever He goes!

I. First, then, TO EXPOSE YOUR OBJECTIONS.

I cannot tell, man by man, what may be the precise “but” that causes you to draw back. But perhaps, by giving a list, I may be directed to describe full many a case exactly, and with precision. Some there are who say, and seem very sincere in the utterance, “Lord, I would be a Christian, I would believe in You, and take up Your cross and follow You, but *my calling prevents it*. Such is my state of life that piety would be to me impossible. I must live, and I cannot live by godliness, therefore, I am to be excused for the present from following Christ. My position is such in trade, that I am compelled by its practices to do many things which would be utterly inconsistent with the life of Christ in my soul. I know that I have been called to be where I am, but it is a position which renders my salvation hopeless. If I were anything but what I am or anywhere but where I am, I might follow Christ, but under existing circumstances, it is far beyond my power.” Let me answer that excuse of yours, and

show how stupid it is. man, would you make God the author of sin? And yet, if you are prepared to say that God has put you in the calling where you are, and that that calling absolutely necessitates sin—do you not perceive that you make the sin to be God's, and not yours? Are you prepared to be as blasphemous as that? Will you bring the tricks of your trade, your dishonesties, and your sins, and say, "Great God, *You* have compelled me to do this"? Oh, I think you cannot have so hardened your brow until it has become like flint! Surely you have some conscience of integrity left, and if you have, your conscience will respond to me when I say you know you are speaking a lie! God has not put you where you are compelled to sin—and if you have put yourself there—what ought you to do, but to leave that place at once? Surely the necessity to sin arising from your own choice does but render your sin the more exceedingly sinful! "But," you reply, "I will confess, then, that I have put myself there by choice."

Then I say again, if you have chosen so ill a trade that you cannot live by it honestly—in the fear of God, and in obedience to His precepts—you have made an ill and wicked choice! At all hazards—for the salvation of your soul rests on it—give it up, though it means the renouncing of every worldly prospect! Though wealth be all but in your grasp—unless you would grasp damnation and inherit everlasting wrath—you must renounce it and renounce it now! Scarcely, however, can I credit that such is the fact, for in all callings, except they are in themselves positively unlawful, a man may serve God. Perhaps the most difficult post for a Christian to occupy is the army, and yet, have we not seen—and do we not see at this day—men of high and exemplary piety, men of undoubted and pre-eminent godliness who are still in the ranks, and are soldiers of Christ? With the example of Colonel Gardner in years gone by, of Hedley Vicars, and Havelock in these modern times, I will

not, I *dare* not take your excuse, nor do I think your conscience would permit it. But if, while the temptations are strong, and your strength is small, you really think that there you cannot serve God, then resign your commission, give it up! It would be better for you to enter into life poor and penniless, and without fame or honor, than having glory, and pomp, and wealth, to enter into hell! After all, to come nearer to the point, is it your occupation at all? Is it true? Is it not *your sin* that has made your “but,” and not your calling? Be honest with yourself, sir, I pray you! You say that your calling throws temptations in your way—is it so? Do not other men avoid the temptations, and because they hate sin, being taught of God the Holy Spirit, are they not able, even in the midst of temptation, to keep them unspotted from the world? It is, then, in your case not *necessity*, but *willfulness* that makes you continue impious and impenitent! Put the saddle on the right horse; do not put it where it should not be; take it home to yourself! There is no objection in the calling, unless, again I repeat it, it is an objectionable calling! The root and real cause of your hardness of heart against Christ is in *yourself* and *yourself* alone. You are willingly in love with sin—it is not in your calling in providence.

“Yes, but,” says another, “if it is not in our calling, yet, in my case, it is my peculiar position in providence. It is all very well for the minister, who has not to mingle with daily life, but can come up into his pulpit and pray and preach, to make little excuse for men. But I tell you, sir, if you knew how I was situated, you would say that I am quite excusable in postponing the thoughts of God and of eternity! You do not know what it is to have an ungodly husband, or to live in a family where you cannot carry out your convictions without meeting with persecution so ferocious, and so incessant that flesh and blood cannot endure it.” “Besides,” says another, “I am just now in such a peculiar crisis; it may be I have got into it by my sin, but

I feel I cannot get out of it without sin. If I were once out of it, and could start again, and stand upon a new footing, then I might follow Christ, but at the present time there are such things in the house where I live, such circumstances in my business—there are such peculiar trials in my family—that I think I am justified in saying, ‘Go your way this time; when I have a more convenient season I will send for you.’” Ah, but, my friend, is this the truth? Let me put it to you in other words than you have stated it. You say if you follow Christ, you will be persecuted. And does not the Word of God tell you the same? Is it not expressly said, “He who takes not up his cross and follows not after Me cannot be My disciple”? Did not the apostle say, “He who will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution”? What? Is nature to be changed for *you*? Must the apostles and the martyrs endure and suffer great things, and are the little trials that you have to bear to be valid *excuses* for *you*? No. By that host who waded through slaughter to a throne—the slaughter of themselves—no! By the men who wear the crowns which they have won on racks and stakes, I pray you, do not think that this shall be any excuse for you at God’s great day! Or if you think that it is an excuse that is valid for you now, remember, if you reject Christ, you reject the crown! If you cannot bear the reproach of Christ, neither shall you have Christ’s riches; if you will not suffer with Him, neither shall you reign with Him! You say that your circumstances compel you to sin, or else you would get into a world of trouble. And what do you mean by this but that you *prefer your own case* to the Master’s service? You have made this your god! Your own earnings, your own aggrandizement, your own rest and luxury, you have set these up in preference to the command of the God that made you! O sir, do but see the thing in its true light! You have put yourself where the Israelites put the golden calf, and you have bowed down and you have said, “These are your

gods, O Israel!” To these you have offered your peace offerings. Oh, be not deceived! “If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” “He who would save his life shall lose it, but he who will lose his life for Christ’s sake shall save it.” Away, then, with these excuses about your circumstances! They are idle ones, and will not endure the light of the day of judgment!

“Yes,” says another, “I would follow Christ; I have often felt inclinations to do so; and I have had some longings after better things—but the way of Christ is too rough for me. It demands that I should give up pleasures which I really love. I know if I should promise to give them up, I would go back to them very soon. I have tried, but they are too much for me. I did not think at one time that I was so thoroughly chained to them, but when I tried to break away, I found the chains were not as I thought they were—of silk, but of iron—of triple steel! I cannot, sir, I tell you plainly, I cannot. If to be saved requires me to give up my worldly amusements, I cannot do it.” Well, sir, I reply, you have spoken with the candor of an honest man. But will you please understand the bargain a little more clearly? Remember, soul, when you say, “I cannot give up the world” you have said, “I cannot be saved. I cannot escape from hell. I cannot be a partaker of the glories of heaven.” You have preferred the dance to the entertainment of glory! You have preferred the reveling merriments at midnight, to the eternal splendors of the throne of God! You have in cold blood, now mark it—you have in *cold blood* determined to sell your soul for a few hours of giddiness, a little season of mirth! Look it in the face and God help you to understand what you have done! If Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, what have you done? Lift up your eyes to heaven! Behold the golden harps, and listen to the harmony of the glorious song, and then say, “But I prefer your music, O earth, to heaven.” Look yonder to

the golden streets, and the joy and the bliss which await the true believer—and then coolly write it down and say—“I have chosen the casino. I have preferred the house of sin to heaven.” Look up and behold the draughts of joy that await believers, and then go to the tavern and sit down in the tap room, and say, “I have preferred the enjoyments of intoxication to the mirth of eternity.” Come, I say, sir, do look it in the face—for this is what you have done and if—after weighing the two things in the scales together, you find that the momentary enjoyments of the flesh are to be preferred to the eternal weight of glory which God has reserved for them who love Him—then choose them. But if it is nothing in comparison with eternity—if the flesh is but dross in comparison with the Spirit—if this world is emptiness when compared with the world to come, then reverse your foolish decision! May God the Holy Spirit make you wise!

“Oh,” says another, “but it is not *exactly* my pleasures; for I have found no pleasure in sin. It is some time since iniquity ministered pleasure to me; I have drunk the top of the cup. The froth I have already daintily sipped, but now I have come to the dregs”—I know I am speaking to some men today, in this very state—“I have jaded myself,” says such-a-one “in the race of pleasure; I have exhausted my powers of enjoyment, and yet, though the wine yields no lusciousness to my taste, I drink, for I cannot help it; and though lust affords me no longer any exquisite delight, still impelled as by some secret force, I am driven to it! From old habit, it has become a *second nature* with me, and I cannot, I have tried, I have tried awfully and solemnly, but I cannot, I cannot break it off. I am like a man whose boat is taken up by the rapids. I have pulled against the stream with both my arms, till the veins start like whip-cords on my brow, and the blood runs from my nose in agony of vigor, and yet, I cannot reverse the stream! Nor can I set my boat’s head against

it. I can see the precipice; I can hear the roaring of the dashing water as it leaps the cascade, and I am speeding on swifter, and swifter, and swifter, till my very blood boils with the tremendous vehemence of my crimes; I am speeding onward to my merited damnation!”

Ah, man! Yours is a solemn “BUT,” indeed! If I thought you meant it all, I would rather speak to you words of encouragement than of warning. For remember this—when you are ready to perish, God is ready to save! And when *your* power is gone, then the plaintive cry, “Lord, save, or I perish,” wrung from a despairing heart shall reach the ears of the Most High, and He who delights in mercy shall stretch out His arm to save! There is hope, there is hope for you yet! What? Is the boat’s bow already out of the water, and does she seem to leap like a live thing into the midst of the spray? O Eternal God, You can save him! You can come from above and take him out of the deep waters, and pluck him out of the billows that are stronger than he! Yet say now, is this really just as you have described it? I fear lest perhaps you make “cannot” only a substitute for “will not.” Do you not love those ways of the transgressor? Can you honestly say you loathe them? I do not believe you can! Remember the dreadful alternative when you say I cannot renounce these things, and will not look to God to enable you to do it! You have said, “I cannot escape from the flames of hell. I cannot be rescued from the wrath to come. I am damned.” You have, in fact, announced your own doom! That awful sentence you have pronounced upon yourself! You have sat in judgment on your own soul—put on the black cap, and read out your own sentence! You have put yourself upon the death wagon; you have adjusted the rope about your own neck, and you are about to draw the bolt and be your own executioner! Oh, weigh your words, and measure your acts, and wake up to a consciousness of what you are about to do. Do

not take the leap in the dark. Look down the chasm first, and gaze a moment at the jagged rocks beneath, where soon you must lie a mangled corpse. Now, before you drink the cup, know the poison that is in the bottom of it. Make sure of what you are doing, and if you are determined that you will clasp your sins with the spasmodic and terrific grasp of a dying, drowning man—then grasp your sins and lose your soul! Then keep your sins and be damned! Hold fast to your iniquities and be dashed forever from the presence of the Eternal One!

If it is horrible to *hear*; how much more horrible to *do*? If it is dreadful to *speak*—how much more solemn to *perform in cold blood* that which our lips have spoken? Another says, “That is not my case! I can say I will follow Christ, but I am of such a volatile, changeable disposition, that I do not think I ever shall fulfill my purpose. When I heard you preach a few Sabbaths ago, sir, I went home to my chamber and I shut the door, and I prayed. But, you know, some acquaintance called. He took me away, and soon, every good thought was gone! Often have I sat shivering in the pew while the Word of God has been quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword—piercing to the dividing asunder of my joints and marrow! It has been a discernor of the thoughts and intents of my heart—but the world comes in again. And even though I seem sometimes as if I were almost a saint—then again, the next day, I am almost a fiend! Sometimes I think I could do anything for Christ, but the next day, I do everything for the world. I promise, but I do not perform. I vow and break my vows. I am like the smoke from the chimney—soon blown away, and my good resolutions are like a morning cloud. They are there but for the morning, and soon, they are gone.” Well, certainly you have described a case which is too frequent. But will you allow me to put that also in a true and Scriptural light? Soul, do you know you have played with heaven? You have made a game of

eternity! You are like those men in the parable of whom it is said, “They made light of it.” You have thought that the things of this world are more engrossing to you than the things of the world to come. You are perhaps less excusable than any other—for you know right and do it not! You see your sin, and yet you cling to it; you perceive your ruin, and yet you go onwards towards it. You have had wooings of His love; you have had warnings of His mercy, and yet you have shaken all these off. Oh, remember that text, “He who being often reproved hardens his neck shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.” “Because I have called,” says God, “and you refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded; but you have set at nothing all My counsel, and would none of My reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear comes.” You may perhaps soon be given up to a seared conscience. The Word may be powerless upon you. You may become hardened and desperate, and then, ah, then, the devils in hell are not in a more hopeless condition than you may be!

I have thus gone through the most prominent excuses which men make for scattering from themselves those good thoughts which sometimes seek to get possession of their hearts. “I will follow you Lord, *but...*” I cannot, of course, point out the distinct persons in this large assembly who are in this condition. That there are such is certain. I pray God the Holy Spirit to find them out, and make them judge themselves that they be not judged!

II. I shall now come to the second part of my discourse. May the Lord be our helper. Soul, you who say, “I will follow Christ, *but...*” I now come to **EXPOSE YOUR IGNORANCE AND THE ILL STATE OF YOUR HEART.**

Soul, you have as yet no true idea of what sin is. God the Holy Spirit has never opened your eyes to see what an evil and

bitter thing it is to sin against God, or else there would be no “buts.” Picture a man who has lost his way, who has sunk into a slough; the waters and the mire are come up to his very throat. He is about to sink in it, when some bright spirit comes, stepping over the treacherous bog, and holds out his hand to him. That man, if he knows where he is, if he knows his uncomfortable and desperate state, will put out his hand at once! You will not find him hesitating with “buts,” and “ifs,” and “perhaps.” He feels that he is plunged into the ditch, and needs out of it. And *you*, apparently, are still in the wilderness of your natural state! You have not yet discovered what a fool might see, though a wayfaring man, that sin is a tremendous evil, that your sin is all destructive, and will yet swallow you up and utterly destroy your soul. I know that when God the Holy Spirit tells me to see the blackness of sin, I do not need any very great pressing to be willing to be washed! My only question is, “Would Christ wash me?” Ask any poor penitent sinner who knows what the burden of sin is, whether he will have it taken off his shoulders, and he will not say, “I would have it taken off; but...” No, he will need but the very mention of the removal of his load! “Lord,” says he, “do but take it away from me—do but take it away, and I am well content.”

Again—soul, it seems plain to me that you have never yet been taught by the Holy Spirit what your state of condemnation is. You have never yet learned that the wrath of God abides on you! As long as you are out of Christ, you are under a curse. If that word “*condemnation*” had once been rung in your ears, you would have no *ifs* and *buts*. When a man’s house is on fire, and he stands at the fire escape, and his hair begins to be crisp with the hot tongues of fire that scorch his cheeks, he has no “buts” about it—but down the escape he goes at once! When Lot began to see the fiery shower coming down from heaven, he had no “buts” about making the best of his way out of the city,

and escaping to the mountains! And you, O may God the Holy Spirit show to you, sinner, where you are today! Oh, that He would make you know that your sentence is pronounced, that God's messengers are out after you to take you to prison! Then, you will leave off your "buts." You will say, "Lord, what would You have me to do?" And be it what it may, your soul will make no hesitation about it! Surely, I think you cannot have felt the danger you are in of daily destruction! If you have not felt that, I do not think the Spirit of God has ever come into your soul after a real and saving fashion. You have no proof that you are one of Christ's unless you have felt the danger of your natural state! Do you see there? There is a scaffold raised; a man is brought out to execution—there is the block, and here stands the headsman with his sharp gleaming axe, gleaming in the morning sun. The man has just laid his neck upon the block in the little hollow place shaped out for it. There he lies and the headsman has just lifted up the axe to cleave his head from his body! As that man lies there, if a messenger should come from the king and say, "Here is a pardon, will you accept it?" Do you believe he would say, "I will accept it, *but...*"? No, springing up from what he thought would be his last resting place, he would say, "I thank his majesty for his abundant grace, and cheerfully do I rejoice in accepting it." You cannot have known where you are, or else "but" would be impossible to you! Such is your state, remember, whether you know it or not—you put your neck upon the block of insensibility, but the axe of justice is ready to smite you down to hell! The Lord help you to see your state and put the "buts" away from you.

It seems to me, too, that you are ignorant altogether of what the wrath of God must be in the world to come. Oh, could I take you to that place where hope has always been a stranger; if you could put your ear a moment to the gratings of those gloomy dungeons of which despair is the horrid

warder—if I could make you listen to the sighs, the useless regrets, and the vain prayers of those who are cast away, you would come back frightened and alarmed! And I am sure your “buts” would have been driven out of you! You would say, “Great God, if You will but save me from Your wrath, do what You will with me, I will make no conditions, I will offer You no objections! If I must cut off my right arm, or pluck out my right eye, be it so, if from this place of woe You will but save me. Oh, from this fire that never can be quenched, from this worm of endless fires which can never die, great God deliver me! If rough be the means and unpleasant to the flesh, yet grant me but this one request—save me, O God—save me from going down into the pit of hell!” If a soul were just sinking to hell, and God could send some bright angel to pluck it from the flames just as it entered there, can you imagine its being so mad as to say, “I would be plucked as a brand from the burning, *but...*”? No, no! Glad to embrace the messenger of mercy, it would rejoice to fly from hell to heaven!

Again, sinner, it seems clear to me, inasmuch as you say, “but,” that you can have no idea of the glory of the person of Christ. I see you sitting down in your misery, in the bare uncomfortable cottage of your natural estate; yourself naked and filthy, with your hair matted over your eyes. Behold a bright chariot stops at your door! The sound of music is heard, and the King Himself, stepping down from the chariot of His glory comes in, and He says, “Sinner, poor, hopeless, weak, miserable sinner, look unto Me, and be you saved. The chariot of My mercy awaits you. Come you with Me, My chariot is paved with love for such as you are! Come with Me, and I will bear you to My splendors away from your degradation and your woe.” You sit there and you will not look at Him, for if you did look, you must love Him. You could not behold His face, you could not see the mercy that is written there, the pity that trembles in His

eyes, the power that is in His arms, but you would say at once, “Jesus, You have overcome my heart, Your gracious beauty is more than a match for me!”—

“Dissolved by Your goodness I fall to the ground,
And weep to the praise of the mercy I’ve found.”

Shall I say more? Yet this once again I will admonish you. O you procrastinating, objecting sinner! You have never known what heaven is, or else you would never have a “but.” If you and I could peep but for an instant within the pearly gates; could you listen to that seraphic song; could behold the joy which flows and overflows the bosoms of the blessed; could you but spell heaven, not in letters but in feelings; could you wear its crown a moment, or be girt about with its pure white garments, you would say, “If I must go through hell to reach heaven, I would cheerfully do it! What are you, riches? You are bubbles! What are you, pomps? You are driveling emptinesses! What are you, pleasures? You are mocking, painted witcheries! What are you, pains? You are joys! What are you, sorrows? You are but bliss! What are you, tribulations? You are lighter than feathers when I compare you with this exceeding and eternal weight of glory! If we could have but a glimpse of heaven—but a shadow of an idea of what is the eternal rest of God’s people—we would be prepared to endure all things, to give up all things, to bear all things, if we might but be partakers of the promised reward! Your “buts” betray your ignorance. Your ignorance of self, ignorance of sin, ignorance of condemnation, ignorance of the punishment, ignorance of the Savior’s person, and ignorance of the heaven to which He promises His people!

III. Now, I have my last work to do, and that would I do briefly. Oh, may strength superior to mine come now and tug and strive and wrestle with your hearts! May the Spirit of God

apply the words which I shall now use! “Lord, I will follow You; but...” Sinner, sinner, let me **SHOW YOU YOUR SIN!** When you said “but,” you did contradict yourself. The meaning of that rightly read is this, “Lord, I will *not* follow You.” That “but” of yours puts the negative on all the profession that went before it! I wish, my hearers, that this morning you would either be led by grace to say, “I will believe,” or else were permitted honestly to see the depravity and desperate hardness of your own hearts so as to say, “I will *not* believe in Christ.” It is because so many of you are neither this nor that, but halting between two opinions, that you are the hardest characters to deal with! Sinners who reject Christ altogether willfully are like flints. When the hammer of the Word comes against them, the flint gives forth the precious spark and flies to atoms. But you are like a mass of wax molded one day into one shape, and molded the next day into another. I know a gentleman of considerable position in the world, who, after having been with me some little time, said, “Now that you are going away, I shall be just what I was before;” for he had wept under the Word. He compared himself, he said, to a rubber doll. He had got out of his old shape for a little while—but he would go back to what he was before. And how many of you there are of this kind! You will not say, “I will not have Christ;” you will not say, “I will not think of these things;” you dare not say, “I disbelieve the Bible,” or, “I think there is no God and no hereafter;” but you say, “No doubt it is true, I’ll think of it by-and-by.” You never will, sinner, you never will! You will go on from day to day harping that, till your last day shall come—and you will be found then where you are now—unless sovereign grace prevents it. I could have more hope for you if you would say at once, “I love not God, I love not Christ, I fear Him not, I desire not His salvation,” for then, I think you would get an idea of what you are, and God the Spirit might bless it to you. Let me

show you again your sin in another respect. How great has been your pride! When Christ bids you believe on Him, take up His cross and follow Him, He tells you to do the best thing you can do, and then you set up your judgment in contradiction to Him! You say, “But.” What? Is Christ to mend His gospel because of your whims? What? Is the plan of salvation to be cut and shaped to suit *you*? Does not Christ know what is best for you better than you do yourself? Will you snatch from His hand the balance and the rod, re-judge His judgment, and dictate to God, the Judge of all the earth? And yet, this is exactly what you attempt to do! You set up your throne in rivalry to the throne of grace, and insist upon it that there is more wisdom in being a sinner than in being a believer—that there is more happiness to be found apart from God than there is with Him! You make God a hard Master, if not indeed call Him a liar to His face! Oh, you know not what is the quintessence of iniquity which lies within those words so easily spoken, but which will be so hard to get rid of on a dying bed—“I will follow You; but...”

I close when I have just, in a moment or so only, described your danger. Soul, you are quieting yourself and saying, “Ah, it will be well with me at the last, for I intend to be better, by-and-by.” soul, soul, think how many have died while they have been speaking like that! There were put into the grave, during the past week, hundreds of persons, no doubt, who were utterly careless, but there were also scores who were not careless, and who had often been impressed, and yet they said “But, but, but,” and promised better things. But death came in and their better things came not! And then, remember how many have been damned while they have been saying, “but.” They said they would repent, meanwhile they died. They said they would believe, meanwhile in hell they lifted up their eyes being in torments. They meant what they said, but inasmuch as they did it not, they came where their resolutions would be changed into

remorse and their fancied hopes turned into real despair! On such a subject as this I could wish Baxter were the preacher, and that I were the hearer. As I look around you, though there are full many who can read their title clear to mansions in the skies, yet along these pews, what a considerable proportion there is of my hearers who are only deceiving themselves! Well, sinners, I will make the road to hell as hard for you as I can! If you will be lost, I will put up many a chain and many a bar, and shut many a gate across your way! If you will listen to my voice, God helping me, you shall find it a hard way—that way of transgressors; you shall find it a hard thing to run counter to the proclamation of the gospel of Christ! But why will you die, O house of Israel, why will you die? Where has your reason fled? Have beasts become men, and men become beasts? “The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master’s crib,” but you know not! What? Are you like the silly sheep that goes willingly to his slaughter? Are the swallows and cranes wiser than you? For they know the senses, and they judge the times—but you know not that your summer is almost over—that your leaves are falling in the autumn of your life, and that your dreary winter of despair and of hopelessness is drawing near! Souls, are these things fancies? If so, sleep while I preach of them. Are they dreams? Do I bring out these doctrines but as bugaboos to alarm you as if you were some children in a nursery? No! As God is true, are not these the most solemn realities that ever rested on the lips of man or moved the heart of hearers? Then, why is it, why is it, why is it that you still make light of these things? Why is it that you will go your way today as you did before? Why will you say, “Well, the preacher has warned me faithfully, and I will think of it, but...”? “I was invited, and I will consider, but... I did hear the warning, but...”? Ah, souls, while you shall be saying, “But,” there shall be another “But” go forth, and that shall be, “*But* cut him down, why cumberers he

the ground?” Wake, Vengeance, wake! The sinner sleeps! Pluck out your sword, O Justice! Let it not rest in its scabbard, come forth! No, no! Oh come *not* forth, devouring sword! Oh, come *not* forth! O Justice, be still! O Vengeance, put away your sword, and Mercy, reign still! “Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation,” but if you harden your hearts, remember He will swear in His wrath that you shall not enter into His rest! Oh, Spirit of God, turn the sinner, for without You, he will not turn! Our voice shall miss its end, and he will not come to Christ. Hear my cry, O God, for Jesus’ sake!

404 INTERCESSORY PRAYER – JOB 42:10

A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Morning, August 11th, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“The Lord restored Job’s losses when he prayed for his friends.” — Job 42:10

“THE LORD RESTORED Job’s losses.” So, then, our longest sorrows have a close, and there is a bottom to the most profound depths of our misery. Our winters shall not frown forever; summer shall soon smile. The tide shall not eternally ebb out; the floods retrace their march. The night shall not hang its darkness forever over our souls; the sun shall yet arise with healing beneath its wings—“The Lord restored Job’s losses.” Our sorrows shall have an end when God has gotten His end in them. The ends in the case of Job were these, that Satan might be defeated, foiled with his own weapons, and blasted in his hopes when he had everything his own way. God, at Satan’s challenge, had stretched forth His hand and touched Job in his bone and in his flesh, and yet, the tempter could not prevail against him, but received his rebuff in those conquering words, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” When Satan is defeated, then shall the battle cease! The Lord aimed also at the trial of Job’s faith. Many weights were hung upon this palm tree, but it still grew up rightly. The fire had been fierce enough, the gold was undiminished, and only the dross was consumed. Another purpose the Lord had was His own

glory. And God was abundantly glorified! Job had glorified God on his dunghill; now let him magnify his Lord again upon his royal seat in the gate. God had gotten unto Himself eternal renown through that divine grace by which He supported His poor afflicted servant under the heaviest troubles which ever fell to the lot of man. God had another end, and that also was served. Job had been sanctified by his afflictions. His spirit had been mellowed. That small degree of tartness towards others, which may have been in Job's temper, had been at last removed, and any self-justification which once had lurked within was fairly driven out. Now that God's gracious designs are answered, He removes the rod from His servant's back, and takes the melted gold from the midst of the glowing coals. God does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men for nothing, and He shows this by the fact that He never afflicts them longer than there is need for it. He never allows them to be one moment longer in the furnace than is absolutely requisite to serve the purposes of His wisdom and of His love. "The Lord restored Job's losses." beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, you have had a long captivity in affliction. God has sold you into the hand of your adversaries, and you have wept by the waters of Babylon, hanging your harp upon the willows. Despair not! He who restored Job's losses can turn you as the streams in the south! He shall make again your vineyard to blossom, and your field to yield her fruit. You shall again come forth with those who make merry, and once more shall the song of gladness be on your lips! Let not despair rivet his cruel fetters about your soul. Hope yet, for there is hope! He shall bring you up again rejoicing from the land of your captivity, and you shall say of Him, "He has turned my mourning into dancing."

The circumstance which attended Job's restoration is that to which I invite your particular attention. "The Lord restored

Job's losses, when he prayed for his friends." *Intercessory prayer* was the means of his returning greatness. It was the bow in the cloud, the dove bearing the olive branch, the voice of the turtle announcing the coming summer. When his soul began to expand itself in holy and loving prayer for his erring brethren, then the heart of God showed itself to him by returning to him his prosperity without, and cheering his soul within! Brothers and sisters, it is not a fantasy when from such a text as this I address you upon the subject of prayer for others. Let us learn today to imitate the example of Job, and pray for our friends, and perhaps, if we have been in trouble, our losses shall be restored.

Four things I would speak of this morning, and yet, but one thing; I would speak upon intercessory prayer thus—first, *by way of commending the exercise*; secondly, *by way of encouraging you to enlist in it*; thirdly, *by way of suggestion as to the persons for whom you should especially pray*; and fourthly, *by way of exhortation to all believers to undertake and persevere in the exercise of intercessions for others*.

I. First then, BY WAY OF COMMENDING THE EXERCISE, let me remind you, that intercessory prayer has been *practiced by all the best of God's saints*. We may not find instances of it appended to every saint's name, but, beyond a doubt, there has never been a man personally eminent for piety who has not always been pre-eminent in his anxious desires for the good of others, and in his prayers for that end. Take Abraham, the father of the faithful. How earnestly did he plead for his son Ishmael! "O that Ishmael might live before You!" With what persistence did he approach the Lord on the plains of Mamre, when he wrestled with Him again and again for Sodom; how frequently did he reduce the number, as though, to use the expression of the old Puritan, "He were bidding and beating down the price at the market." "Perhaps there are fifty; perhaps there lack five of the fifty; perhaps there are 20 found there;

perhaps there are 10 righteous found there; will You not spare the city for the sake of ten?” Well did he wrestle, and if we may sometimes be tempted to wish he had not paused when he did, yet we must commend him for continuing so long to plead for that doomed and depraved city! Remember Moses, the most royal of men, whether crowned or uncrowned—how often did he intercede? How frequently do you meet with such a record as this—“Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before God”? Remember that cry of his on the top of the mount, when it was to his own personal disadvantage to intercede, and yet, when God had said, “Let Me alone, I will make of you a great nation,” yet how he continued, how he thrust himself in the way of the axe of justice and cried, “Spare them Lord, and if not,” (and here he reached the very climax of agonizing earnestness) “blot my name out of the Book of Life.” Never was there a mightier prophet than Moses, and never one more intensely earnest in intercessory prayer!

Or pass on, if you will, to the days of Samuel. Remember his words, “God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you.” Or think of Solomon, and of his earliest intercession at the opening of the temple, when, with outstretched hands, he prayed for the assembled people! Or if you need another royal example, turn to Hezekiah with Sennacherib’s letter spread out before the Lord, when he prayed not only for himself, but for God’s people of Israel in those times of straits. Think too, of Elijah, who for Israel’s sake, would bring down the rain, that the land perish not; as for him, miracles gave him his bread and his water, it was for others that he prayed. It was for others that he said to his servant, “Go again seven times.” Forget not Jeremiah, whose tears were prayers—prayers coming too intensely from his heart to find expression in any utterance of the lips! He wept himself away; his life was one long shower, each drop a prayer, and the whole

deluge a flood of intercession. And if you would have an example taken from the times of Christ and His apostles, remember how Peter prays on the top of the house and Stephen amidst the falling stones. Or think, if you will, of Paul, of whom even more than of others it could be said, that he never ceased to remember the saints in his prayers, “making mention of you daily in my prayers,” stopping in the very midst of the epistle, and saying, “For which cause I bow my knee unto the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” As for the cloud of holy witnesses in our own time, I will hazard the assertion, that there is not a single child of God, who does not plead with God for his children, for his family, for the church at large, and for the poor ungodly perishing world. I deny his saintship if he does not pray for others!

But, further, while we might commend this duty by quoting innumerable examples from the lives of eminent saints, it is enough for the disciple of Christ if we say that *Christ in His holy gospel has made it your duty and your privilege* to intercede for others! When He taught us to pray, He said, “*Our* Father,” and the expressions which follow are not in the singular, but in the plural—“Give *us* this day *our* daily bread.” “Forgive *us our* debts.” “Lead *us* not into temptation.” Evidently, intending to set forth that none of us are to pray for ourselves alone, that while we may have sometimes prayers so bitter that they must be personal like the Savior’s own; “Father if it is plausible, let this cup pass from Me;” yet, as a rule, our prayers should be public prayers, though offered in private; and even in secret we should not forget the Church of the living God! By the mouth of Paul how frequently does the Holy Spirit exhort us to pray for ministers! “Brethren,” says Paul, “pray for us.” And then, after exhorting them to offer prayers and supplications for all classes and conditions of men, he adds, “And for us, also, that we may have boldness to speak as we ought to speak.” And James, who

is always a practical apostle, bids us pray for one another. In that same verse, where he says, “Confess your sins the one to the other,” he says, “and pray for one another,” and adds the privilege “that you may be healed,” as if the healing would not only come to the sick person for whom we pray, but to us who offer the prayer—we, too, receiving some special blessing when our hearts are enlarged for the people of the living God.

But, brothers and sisters, I shall not stay to quote the texts in which the duty of praying for others is definitely laid down. Permit me to remind you of *the high example of your Master*; He is your pattern; follow His leadership. Was there even *one* who interceded as He did? Remember that golden prayer of His, where he cried for His own people, “Father, keep them, keep them from the evil one!” Oh, what a prayer that was! He seems to have thought of all their needs, of all their wants, of all their weaknesses, and in one long stream of intercession, He pours out His heart before His Father’s throne! Think, how even in the agonies of His crucifixion, He did not forget that He was still an intercessor for man! “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Oh, remember, brothers and sisters, it is your Savior’s example to you today, for there before the throne, with outstretched hands, He prays not for Himself, for He has attained His glory; not for Himself, for He rests from His labors, and has received His everlasting recompense; but, for *you*, for the purchase of His blood, for as many as are called by His grace! Yes, and for those who shall believe on Him through our word—

“For all that come to God by Him,
Salvation He demands!
Points to the wounds upon His heart,
And spreads His bleeding hands.”

Come brothers and sisters, with such an example as this, we are verily guilty if we forget to plead for others!

But, I will go a little further. If in the Bible there were no example of intercessory supplication, if Christ had not left it upon record that it was His will that we should pray for others, and even if we did not know that it was Christ's practice to intercede, yet *the very spirit of our holy religion*, would demand us to plead for others! Do you go up into your closet, and in the face and presence of God, and think of none but yourself? Surely, the love of Christ cannot be in you, for the Spirit of Christ is not selfish! No man lives unto himself when once he has the love of Christ in him. I know there are some whose piety is comfortably tethered within the limits of their own selfish interests. It is enough for them if *they* hear the Word, if *they* are saved, if *they* get to heaven. Ah, miserable spirit, you shall not get there! It would need another heaven for you, for the heaven of Christ is the heaven of the unselfish, the temple of the large-hearted, the bliss of loving spirits, and the heaven of those who, like Christ, are calling to become poor, that others may be rich! I cannot believe—it were a libel upon the cross of Christ, it were a scandal upon the doctrine which He taught—if I could ever believe, that the man whose prayers are selfish has anything of the spirit of Christ within him! Brothers and sisters, I commend intercessory prayer because it opens one's soul, gives a healthy play to his sympathies, compels him to feel that he is not above everybody, and that this whole world and this great universe were not, after all, made that he might be its petty lord, that everything might bend to his will, and all creatures crouch at his feet! It does him good, I say, to make him know that the cross was not lifted up for him alone, for its far-reaching arms were means to drop with benedictions upon millions of the human race! You lean and hungry worshipper of self, this is an exercise which would make

another man of you—a man more like the Son of Man, and less like Nabal the churl!

But, again, I commend the blessed privilege of intercession because of its sheer brotherly nature. You and I may be naturally hard, and harsh, and unlovely of spirit, but much praying for others will remind us we have, indeed, a relationship to the saints, that their interests are ours, that we are jointly concerned with them in all the privileges of grace. I do not know anything which, through the grace of God, may be a better means of uniting us, the one to the other, than constant prayer for each other. You cannot harbor enmity in your soul against your brother after you have learned to pray for him! If he has done you ill, when you have taken that ill to the mercy seat, and prayed over it, you must forgive! Surely, you could not be such a hypocrite as to invoke blessings on his head before God, and then come forth to curse him in your own soul! When there have been complaints brought by brother against brother, it is generally best to say, “Let us pray before we enter into the matter.” Wherever there is a case to be decided by the pastor, he ought always to say to the brethren who contend, “Let us pray first,” and it will often happen that through prayer, the differences will soon be forgotten. They will become so slight, so trivial, that when the brethren rise from their knees, they will say, “They are gone; we cannot now contend, after having been one in heart before the throne of God.” I have heard of a man who had made complaints against his minister, and his minister wisely said to him, “Well don’t talk to me in the street. Come to my house and let us hear it all.” He went and the minister said, “My brother, I hope that what you have to say to me may be greatly blessed to me. No doubt I have my imperfections as well as another man, and I hope I shall never be above being told of them, but in order that what you have to say to me may be blessed to me, let us kneel down and pray together.” So our

quarrelsome friend prayed first, and the minister prayed next, both briefly. When they rose from their knees, he said, “Now, my brother, I think we are both in a good state of mind. Tell me what it is that you have to find fault with.” The man blushed, and stammered and stuttered, and said he did not think there was anything at all except in himself. “I have forgotten to pray for you, sir,” he said, “and of course, I cannot expect that God will feed my soul through you, when I neglect to mention you at the throne of grace.” Ah, well, brothers and sisters, if you will exercise yourselves much in supplication for your brethren, you will forgive their tempers! You will overlook their rashness, you will not think of their harsh words, but knowing that you also may be tempted, and are men of like passions with them; you can cover their faults, and bear with their infirmities.

Shall I need to say more in commendation of intercessory prayer except that it seems to me that when God gives any man or woman much grace, it must be with the design that he may use it for the rest of the family? I would compare you who have near communion with God, to courtiers in the king's palace. What do courtiers do? Do they not avail themselves of their influence at court to take the petitions of their friends, and present them where they can be heard? This is what we call patronage—a thing with which many find fault when it is used for political ends, but there is a kind of heavenly patronage, which you ought to use right diligently. I ask you to use it on my behalf! When it is well with you, then, think of me. I pray you use it on the behalf of the poor, the sick, the afflicted, the tempted, the tried, the desponding, the despairing, the imprisoned! When you have the King's ear, speak to Him for us! When you are permitted to come very near to His throne, and He says to you, “Ask and I will give you what you will.” When your faith is strong, your eyes clear, your access near, your interest sure, and the love of God sweetly shed abroad in

your heart—then take the petitions of your poor brothers and sisters who stand outside at the gate, and say, “My Lord, I have a poor brother, a poor sister, children of Yours, who have desired me to ask of You this favor. Grant it unto me; it shall be a favor shown unto myself. Grant it unto them, for they are Yours. Do it for Jesus’ sake!” No, to come to an end in this matter of commendation, it is utterly impossible that you should have a large measure of grace unless it prompts you to use your influence for others! Soul, if you have grace at all, and are not a mighty intercessor— that grace must be but as a grain of mustard seed—a shriveled, uncomely, puny thing! You have just enough grace to float your soul clear from the quicksand, but you have no deep floods of grace, or else you would carry in your joyous boat, a rich cargo of the needs of others, up to the throne of God! And you would bring back for them rich blessings, which but for you, they might not have obtained! If you are like an angel with your foot upon the golden ladder which reaches to heaven; if you are ascending and descending, know that you will ascend with others’ prayers, and descend with others’ blessings—for it is impossible for a full-grown saint to live or to pray for himself alone!

II. We turn to our second point, and endeavor to say something **BY WAY OF ENCOURAGEMENT**, that you may cheerfully offer intercessory supplications.

First, remember that intercessory prayer is the sweetest prayer God ever hears. Do not question it, for the prayer of Christ is of this character. In all the incense which now our Great High Priest puts into the censor, there is not a single grain that is for Himself. His work is done. His reward obtained. Now, you do not doubt, but that Christ’s prayer is the most acceptable of all supplications, do you? Very well, my brethren, the more your prayer is like Christ’s, the more sweet it will be; and while petitions for yourself will be accepted, yet your

pleadings for others, having in them more of the fruits of the Spirit, more love, perhaps more faith, certainly more brotherly kindness—they will be as the sweetest oblation that you can offer to God, the very fat of your sacrifice! Remember, again, that intercessory prayer is exceedingly prevalent. What it has worked! Intercessory prayer has stopped plagues! It removed the darkness which rested over Egypt. It drove away the frogs which leaped upon the land. It scattered the lice and locusts which plagued the inhabitants of Zoan. It removed the pestilence and the thunder and the lightning. It stayed all the ravages which God's avenging hand did upon Pharaoh and his people. Intercessory prayer has healed diseases—we know it did in the early church; we have evidence of it in old Mosaic times. When Miriam was smitten with leprosy, Moses prayed, and the leprosy was removed. It has restored withered limbs. When the king's arm was withered, he said to the prophet, "Pray for me," and his arm was restored as it was before. Intercessory prayer has raised the dead! Fair Elijah stretched himself upon the child seven times and the child sneezed, and the child's soul returned. As to how many souls intercessory prayer has instrumentally saved, recording angel, you can tell! Eternity, you shall reveal! There is nothing which intercessory prayer cannot do! Oh, believer, you have a mighty engine in your hands—use it well—use it constantly! Use it now with faith, and you shall surely prevail. But, perhaps, you have a doubt about interceding for someone who has fallen far into sin. Brothers and sisters, did you ever hear of men who have been thought to be dead while yet alive? Have you ever heard around the farmer's fire, some old-fashioned story of one who was washed and laid out, and wrapped up in his shroud to be put into his coffin, and yet, he was but in a trance and not dead? And have you not heard old legends of men and women who have been buried alive?

I cannot vouch for the accuracy of those tales, but I can tell you, that *spiritually*, there has been many a man given up for dead who was still within reach of divine grace. There has been many a soul that has been put into the winding sheet, even by Christian people; given up to damnation, even by the ministers of Christ; consigned to perdition, even by their own kinsfolk. But yet, into perdition they did not go— God found them— and took them out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and set their living feet upon His living rock! Oh, give up on nobody! Still pray; lay none out for spiritually dead until they are laid out for dead naturally! But, perhaps, you say, “I cannot pray for others, for I am so weak, so powerless.” You will get strength, my brothers and sisters, by the exertion. But, besides, the prevalence of prayer does not depend upon the *strength of the man who prays*, but upon the power of the argument he uses! Now, brothers and sisters, if you sow seed, you may be very feeble, but it is not your hand that puts the seed into the ground which produces the harvest—it is the vitality in the seed! And so in the prayer of faith—when you can plead a promise, and drop that prayer into the ground with hope, your weakness shall not make it miscarry; it shall still prevail with God, and bring down blessings from on high. Job! You come from your dunghill to intercede, and so may I come from my couch of weakness! You came from your poverty and your desertion to intercede for others—and so may we! Elijah was a man of like passions—sweet word!—of like passions, like infirmities, like tendencies to sin, but he prevailed and so shall we! Only, see to it that you are not negligent in these exercises, but that you pray much for others, even as Job prayed for his friends.

Now that the air is very hot, and the atmosphere heavy and becalmed, our friends find it difficult to listen—more difficult even than the speaker finds it to preach! Now, may I have your attention yet once again—and a change of position may do us

all good—will you stand up and put the text into use by offering an intercessory prayer, and then I will go on again? It shall be this one—

“Pity the nations, O our God,
Compel the earth to come!
Send Your victorious word abroad,
And bring the strangers home!”
[The congregation here rose and sung the verse.]

III. The third head is **A SUGGESTION AS TO THE PERSONS FOR WHOM WE SHOULD MORE PARTICULARLY PRAY.** It shall be but a suggestion, and I will then turn to my last point. In the case of Job, he prayed for his *offending* friends. They had spoken exceedingly harshly of him. They had misconstrued all his previous life, and there had never been a part of his character which deserved censure—for the Lord witnessed concerning him, that he was a perfect and an upright man—yet they accused him of hypocrisy, and supposed that all he did was for the sake of gain. Now, perhaps there is no greater offense which can be given to an upright and a holy man, than to his face, to suspect his motives, and to accuse him of self-seeking. And yet, shaking off everything, as the sun frets the darkness that has hidden its glory, and scatters it by its own beams, Job comes to the mercy seat and pleads. He is accepted himself, and he begs that his friends may be accepted, too. Carry your offending ones to the throne of God; it shall be a blessed method of proving the trueness of your forgiveness! Do not do that, however, in a threatening way. I remember having to deal faithfully with a hypocrite, who told me, by way of threat, he would pray for me. It was a horrid threat—for who would wish to have his name associated with a prayer which would be an abomination to the Lord? Do not do it in

that sense, as though like an arrogant hypocrite, you would make your prayer itself a stalking horse for your vain-glory; but do it when you are alone before God, and in secret, not that you may gratify your revenge by telling the story again, for that were abominable indeed, but that you may remove from your erring brother, any sin which may have stained his garments, by asking the Lord to forgive him.

Again—be sure you take there your *argumentative* friends. These brothers had been arguing with Job, and the controversy dragged its weary length along. Brethren, it is better to pray than it is to argue! Sometimes you think it would be a good thing to have a public discussion upon a doctrine. It would be a better thing to have prayer over it. You say, “Let two good men, on different sides, meet and fight the matter out.” I say, “No! Let the two good men meet and pray the matter out.” He that will not submit his doctrine to the test of the mercy seat, I should suspect is wrong. I can say that I am not afraid to offer prayer that my brothers who do not see “believers’ baptism” may be made to see it. If they think I am wrong, I wish that they would pray to God to set us right! But, I have never heard them do that; I have never heard them say to the Lord to convince us of the truth of infant sprinkling. I wish they would, if they believe it to be Scriptural—and I am perfectly willing to put it to the old test—the God that answers by fire, let Him be God! And whichever shall prevail, when prayer shall be the ultimate arbiter, let that stand! Carry your dear friends who are wrong in practice, not to the discussion room, or to the debating club, but carry them before God and let this be your cry, “Oh, You who teaches us to our profit, teach me if I am wrong, and teach my friend wherein *he* errs, and make us right.”

This is the thing we ought also to do with our *haughty* friends. Eliphaz and Bildad were very high and haughty. Oh, how they looked down upon poor Job! They thought he was a

very great sinner, a very desperate hypocrite; they stayed with him, but doubtless, they thought it very great condescension. Now, you sometimes hear complaints made by Christians about other people being proud. It may not make them humble for you to grumble about that! What if there is a Mrs. So-and-So who wears a very rustling dress, and never takes any notice of you because you cannot rustle too? What if there is a brother who can afford to wear creaking boots, and will not notice you in the street because you happen to be poor? Tell your Father about it; that is the best way. Why, you would not be angry, I suppose, with a man for having the gout, or a diseased liver, or a cataract in the eye; you would pity him. Why be angry with your brother because of his being proud? It is a disease, a very bad disease, that scarlet fever of pride. Go and pray the Lord to cure him; your anger will not do it! It may puff him up and make him worse than ever he was before, but it will not set him right! Pray him down, brothers and sisters, pray him down! Have a duel with him, and have the choice of weapons yourself, and let that be the weapon of all prayer; and if he is proud, I know this, if you prevail with God, God will soon take the pride out of His own child, and remake him humble as he should be! But, particularly, let me ask you to pray most for those who are *disabled from praying* for themselves. Job's three friends could not pray for themselves, because the Lord said He would not accept them if they did. He said He was angry with them. But as for Job, He said, "Him will I accept." Do not let me shock your feelings when I say there are some, even as God's people, who are not able to pray acceptably at certain seasons. When a man has just been committing sin, repentance is his first work, not prayer! He must first set matters right between God and his own soul before he may go and intercede for others. And, there are many poor Christians who cannot pray; doubt has come in, sin has taken away their confidence, and they are

standing outside the gate with their petitions; they dare not enter within the veil. There are many tried believers, too, who are so desponding that they cannot pray with faith, and therefore, they cannot prevail. Now, my dear brothers and sisters, if you can pray, take their sins into court with you, and when you have had your own hearing, then say, “But, my Lord, inasmuch as You have honored me, and made me to eat of Your bread, and drink from Your cup, hear me for Your poor people who are just now denied the light of Your countenance.” Besides, there are millions of poor sinners who are dead in sin, and they cannot pray; *pray for them*. It is a blessed thing—that vicarious repentance and vicarious faith which a saint may exert towards sinners! “Lord, that sinner does not feel; help me to feel for him, because he will not feel. Lord, that sinner will not believe in Christ; he does not think that Christ can save him, but I know He can, and I will pray believingly for that sinner, and I will repent for him. And though my repentance and my faith will not avail him without his personal repentance and faith, yet, it may come to pass, that through me, he may be brought to repentance and led to prayer.”

IV. Now, lest I should weary you, let me come to the closing part of my discourse. And, O God, lend us Your strength now, that this duty may come forcibly home to our conscience, and we may at once engage in this exercise! Brothers and sisters, I have to **EXHORT YOU TO PRAY FOR OTHERS**. Before I do it, I will ask you a personal question. Do you always pray for others? Guilty or not guilty, here? Do you think you have taken the case of your children, your church, your neighborhood, and the ungodly world before God as you ought to have done? If *you* have, *I* have not! For I stand here a chief culprit before the Master to make confession of the sin. And, while I shall exhort you to practice what is undoubtedly a noble privilege, I shall be most of all exhorting myself.

I begin thus, by saying, brothers and sisters, how can you and I repay the debt we owe to the Church unless we pray for others? How was it that you were converted? It was because somebody else prayed for you! I, in tracing back my own conversion, cannot fail to impute it, through God's Spirit, to the prayers of my mother. I believe that the Lord heard her earnest cries, when I knew not that her soul was exercised about me. There are many of you who were prayed for when you were asleep in your cradles as unconscious infants; your mothers' liquid prayer fell hot upon your infant brows and gave you what was a true *christening* while you were still but little ones. There are husbands here who owe their conversion to their wives' prayers; brothers who must acknowledge that it was a sister's pleading; children who must confess that their Sunday school teachers prayed for them. Now, if by others' prayers you and I were brought to Christ, how can we repay this Christian kindness but by pleading for others? He who has not a man to pray for him, may write himself down a hopeless character! During one of the revivals in America, a young man was going to see the minister, but he did not, because the minister had avoided him with considerable coldness. A remark was made to the minister upon what he had done, and he said, "Well, I did not want to see him; I knew he had only come to mock and scoff; what should I ask him for? You do not know him as well as I do, or else you would have done the same." A day or two after, there was a public meeting, where the preaching of the Word was to be carried on in the hope that the revival might be continued. A young man who had been lately converted through the prayers of another young man was riding to the worship on his horse, and as he was riding along, he was overtaken by our young friend whom the minister thought so godless. He said to him, "Where are you going today, William?" "Well, I am going to the meeting, and I hear that you have been

converted.” “I thank God I have been brought to knowledge of the truth,” he answered. “Oh,” said the other, “I shall never be; I wish I might.” His friend was surprised to hear him, whom the minister thought to be so hard, say that, and he said, “But why cannot you be converted?” “Why?” said the other, “You know you were converted through the prayers of Mr. K___.” “Yes, so I was.” “Ah,” said the other, “There is nobody to pray for me; they have all given me up long ago.” “Why,” said his friend, “it is very singular, but Mr. K___, who prayed for me, has been praying for you, too! We were together last night, and I heard him.” The other threw himself back in his saddle and seemed as if he would fall from his horse with surprise! “Is that true?” he asked. “Yes, it is.” “Then blessed be God, there is hope for me, now, and if he has prayed for me; that gives me a reason why I should now pray believingly for myself.” And he did so, and that meeting witnessed him confessing his faith in Christ. Now, let no man you know say that there is nobody to pray for him! But, as you had somebody to plead for you, you find someone to plead for!

Then, again, permit me to ask how are you to prove your love to Christ or to His church, if you refuse to pray for each other? “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” If we do not love the brethren, we are still dead! How can a man say he loves the brethren if he does not pray for them? What? It is the very least thing you can do, and if you do not perform the least, you certainly will fail in the greater! You do not love the brethren unless you pray for them, and then it follows you are dead in trespasses and sins. Let me ask you again, how is it you hope to get your own prayers answered if you never plead for others? Will not the Lord say, “Selfish wretch; you are always knocking at My door, but it is always to cry for your own welfare, and never for another’s. Inasmuch as you have never asked for a blessing for

one of the least of these My brethren, neither will I give a blessing to you. You love not the saints; you love not your fellow men—how can you love Me, whom you have not seen—and how shall I love you, and give you the blessing which you ask at My hands?” Brothers and sisters, again I say, I would earnestly exhort you to intercede for others, for how can you be Christians if you do not? Christians are priests, but how can they be priests if they offer no sacrifice? Christians are lights, but how can they be lights unless they shine for others? Christians are sent into the world even as Christ was sent into the world, but how can they be sent unless they are *sent to pray*? Christians are meant, not only to be blessed themselves, but in them shall all the nations of the earth be blessed—but how, if you refuse to pray? Give up your profession, cast down, I pray you, the ephod of a priest if you will not burn the incense! Renounce your Christianity if you will not carry it out! Make not a mockery and sport of solemn things, and you will do so, if you still refuse selfishly to give to your friends a part and a lot in your supplication before the throne of God!

O brothers and sisters let us unite with one heart and with one soul to plead with God for this neighborhood! Let us carry “London” written on our breasts, just as the high priest of old carried the names of the tribes. Mothers, bear your children before God! Fathers, carry your sons and your daughters! Brothers and sisters let us take a wicked world and the dark places thereof which are full of the habitations of cruelty! Let us cry aloud and keep no silence and give to the Lord no rest till He establishes and makes His Church praise in the earth! Evoke, you watchmen upon Zion’s walls, and renew your shouts! Wake you favorites of heaven, and renew your prayers! The cloud hangs above you; it’s yours to draw down its sacred floods in genial showers by earnest prayers! God has put high up in the mountains of His promise, springs of love—it is yours

to bring them down, by the divine channel of your intense supplications! Do it, I pray you, lest inasmuch as you have shut your heart of compassion, and have refused to plead with God for the conversion of others, He should say in His wrath, “These are not My children! They have not My spirit! They are not partakers of My love, neither shall they enter into My rest.” Why, there are some of you who have not prayed for others for months, I am afraid, except it is at a prayer meeting. You know what your night prayer is. It is, “Lord, take care of my family.” You know how some farmers pray, “Lord, send fair weather in this part of the country; Lord, preserve the precise fruits of the field all round this neighborhood; never mind about their being spoilt anywhere else, for that will send the markets up.” And so there are some, who make themselves special objects of supplication, but what care they for the perishing crowd? This is the drift of some men’s wishes, “Lord, bless the Church, but don’t send another minister into our neighborhood, lest he should take our congregations from us. Lord, send laborers into the vineyard, but do not send them into our corner, lest they should take any of our glory from us.”

Let us have done with that kind of supplication! Let us be Christians! Let us have expanded souls and minds that can feel for others; let us weep with them who weep, and rejoice with them who rejoice; and as a Church and as private persons, we shall find the Lord will restore our losses when we pray for our friends! God help us to plead for others! And as for you who have never prayed for yourselves, God help you to believe in the Lord Jesus!

405 THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM – MATT. 21:5

A Sermon

Delivered on Sunday Morning, August 18th, 1861,

by the

REV. C. H. SPURGEON

At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Tell you the daughter of Zion, Behold, your King is coming to you, lowly, and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.” — Matthew 21:5

WE HAVE READ the chapter from which our text is taken. Let me now rehearse the incident in your hearing. There was an expectation upon the popular mind of the Jewish people, that Messiah was about to come. They expected Him to be a temporal prince, one who would make war upon the Romans, and restore to the Jews their lost nationality. There were many who, though they did not believe in Christ with a *spiritual* faith, nevertheless, hoped that perhaps He might be to them a great *temporal* deliverer, and we read that on one or two occasions they would have taken Him and made Him a king, but that He hid Himself. There was an anxious desire that somebody or other should lift the standard of rebellion and lead the people against their oppressors. Seeing the mighty things which Christ did, the wish was father to the thought, and they imagined that He might probably restore the kingdom to Israel, and set them free. The Savior at length saw that it was coming to a crisis. For Him it must either be death for having disappointed popular expectation, or else He must yield to the wishes of the people,

and be made a king. You know which He chose. He came to save others, and not to be made a king Himself in the sense in which they understood Him. The Lord had worked a most remarkable miracle; He had raised Lazarus from the dead after he had been buried four days. This was a miracle so novel and so astounding, that it became town talk. Multitudes went out of Jerusalem to Bethany; it was only about two miles distant, to see Lazarus. The miracle was well authenticated; there were multitudes of witnesses; it was generally accepted as being one of the greatest marvels of the age, and they drew the inference from it that Christ must be the Messiah. The people determined that now they would make Him a king, and that now He should lead them against the hosts of Rome. He, intending no such thing, nevertheless, overruled their enthusiasm that by it He might have an opportunity of performing that which had been written of Him in the prophets. You must not imagine that all those who strewed the branches in the way and cried, “Hosanna,” cared about Christ as a *spiritual* prince! No, they thought that He was to be a *temporal* deliverer, and when they found out afterwards that they were mistaken, they hated Him just as much as they had loved Him and, “Crucify Him, crucify Him,” was as loud and vehement a cry as, “Hosanna, blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord.” Our Savior thus availed Himself of their mistaken enthusiasm for many wise ends and purposes. It was necessary that the prophecy should be fulfilled—“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you, lowly and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.” It was necessary again, that He should make a public claim to be the Son of David, and that He should claim to be the rightful inheritor of David’s throne—this He did on this occasion. It was necessary, too, that He should leave His enemies without excuse. In order that they might not say, “If you are the Messiah,

tell us plainly,” He did tell them plainly. *This riding through the streets of Jerusalem was as plain a manifesto and proclamation of His royal rights as could possibly have been issued.* I think, moreover—and upon this I build the discourse of this morning—I think that Christ used the popular fanaticism as an opportunity of preaching to us a living sermon, embodying great truths which are too apt to be forgotten because of their spiritual character, embodying them in the outward form and symbol of Himself riding as a king, attended by hosts of followers. We come to this as the subject of our sermon. Let us see what we can learn from it.

I. One of the first things we learn is this: *By thus riding through the streets in state, Jesus Christ claimed to be a king.* That claim had been to a great extent kept in the background until now; but before He goes to His Father, when His enemies’ rage has reached its utmost fury, and when His own hour of deepest humiliation has just arrived, He makes an open claim before the eyes of all men to be called and acknowledged a king! He summons first His heralds. Two disciples come. He sends forth His mandate—“Go you into the village over against you, and you shall find a donkey and a colt.” He gathers together His courtiers. His 12 disciples, those who usually attended Him, come around Him. He mounts the donkey which of old had been ridden by the Jewish lawgivers, the rulers of the people. He begins to ride through the streets, and the multitudes clap their hands. It is reckoned by some that no fewer than 3,000 people must have been present on the occasion—some going before, some following after—and others standing on either side to see the show. He rides to His capital; the streets of Jerusalem, the royal city, are open to Him; like a king He ascends to His palace. He was a *spiritual* king, and therefore he went not to the temporal palace but to the *spiritual palace*. He rides to the temple, and then, taking possession of it, He begins

to teach in it as He had not done before. He had been sometimes in Solomon's porch, but He was more often on the mountainside than in the temple; but now, like a king, He takes possession of His palace, and there, sitting down on His prophetic throne, He teaches the people in His royal courts. You princes of the earth give ear—there is one who claims to be numbered with you! It is Jesus, the Son of David, and the King of the Jews! Room for Him, you emperors, room for Him! Room for the man who was born in a manger! Room for the man whose disciples were fishermen! Room for Him whose garment was that of a peasant, without seam, woven from the top throughout! He wears no crown except the crown of thorns, yet He is more royal than you! About His loins He wears no purple, yet He is far more imperial than you! Upon His feet there are no silver sandals decked with pearls, yet He is more glorious than you! Room for Him; room for Him! Hosanna! Hosanna! Let Him be proclaimed again a King! A King! A King! Let Him value His place upon His throne, high above the kings of the earth! This is what He then did, He proclaimed Himself a King.

II. Moreover, Christ by this act showed *what sort of a King He might have been if He had pleased, and what sort of a King He might be now, if He willed it*. Had it been our Lord's will, those multitudes who followed Him in the streets would actually have crowned Him then and there! And bowing the knee, they would have accepted Him as the branch that sprung out of the dried root of Jesse—He that was to come—the ruler, the Shiloh among God's people! He had only to have said a word, and they would have rushed with Him at their head to Pilate's palace, and taking him by surprise, with but few soldiers in the land, Pilate might soon have been His prisoner, and have been tried for his life! Before the indomitable valor and the tremendous fury of a Jewish army, Palestine might soon have

been cleared of all the Roman legions, and have become again a royal land. No, with His power of working miracles, with His might by which He drove the soldiers back when He said, “I am He”—He might have cleared not only that land, but every other! He might have marched from country to country, and from kingdom to kingdom till every royal city and every regal state would have yielded to His supremacy. He could have made those who dwelt in the isles of the sea to bow before Him, and they who inhabit the wilderness could have been bid to lick the dust! There was no reason, O you kings of the earth, why Christ could not have been mightier than you! If His kingdom had been of *this* world, He might have founded a dynasty more lasting than yours; He might have gathered troops before whose might your legions would have melted like snow before the summer’s sun! He might have dashed to pieces the Roman image, till, a broken mass, like a potter’s vessel shivered by a rod of iron, it might have been dashed to pieces!

It is even so, my brothers and sisters. If it were Christ’s will, He might make His saints, every one of them, a prince; He might make His church rich and powerful; He might lift up His religion if He chose, and make it the most magnificent and sumptuous. If it were His will, there is no reason why all the glory we read of in the Old Testament under Solomon might not be given to the Church under David’s greater Son. But He did not come to do that, and hence, the impertinence of those who think that Christ is to be worshipped with gorgeous architecture, with magnificent vestments, with proud processions, with the alliance of states with churches, with making the bishops of God magnificent lords and rulers, with lifting up the Church herself, and attempting to put upon her shoulders those garments that will never fit her, vestments that were never meant for her. If Christ cared for this world’s *glory*, it might soon be at His feet! If He willed to take it, who could

raise a tongue against His claim, or who could lift a finger against His might? But He cares not for it. Take your trinkets elsewhere; take your tinsel away—He wants it not! Remove your glory, and your pomp, and your splendor, He needs it not at your hands. His kingdom is *not of this world*; otherwise would His servants fight, otherwise were His ministers clothed in robes of scarlet, and His servants would sit among princes. He cares not for it! People of God, seek not after it. What your Master would not have, do not court yourselves. Oh, Church of Christ, what your husband disdained, you also disdain. He might have had it, but He would not. And He read to us the lesson, that if all these things might be the Church's, it were well for Him to pass by and say, "These are not for Me—I was not meant to shine in these borrowed plumes."

III. But thirdly, and here lies the essence of the matter, you have seen that Christ claimed to be a King; you have seen what kind of a King He might have been and would not be, but now *see what kind of a King He is, and what kind of a King He claimed to be*. What was His kingdom? What is its nature? What was His royal authority? Who were to be His subjects? What are His laws? What is His government? Now perceive at once from the passage taken as a whole, that Christ's kingdom is a very strange one; totally different from anything that ever has been seen or ever will be seen!

It is a kingdom, in the first place, *in which the disciples are the courtiers*. Our blessed Lord had no prince in waiting, no usher of the black rod, no gentlemen-at-arms! Who supplied the place of those grand officers? Why a few poor humble fishermen were His disciples. Learn, then, that if in Christ's kingdom you would be a peer, you must be a *disciple*. To sit at His feet is the honor which He will give you. Hearing His words, obeying His commands, receiving His grace—this is true dignity, this is true magnificence! The poorest man who loves Christ, or the

humblest woman who is willing to accept Him as her teacher, becomes at once one of the nobility that wait upon Christ Jesus! What a kingdom is this which makes fishermen nobles and peasants princes, while they remain but fishermen and peasants! This is the kingdom of which we speak—in which *discipleship* is the highest degree—in which *service* is the patent of nobility!

It is a kingdom, strange to say it, *in which the King's laws are none of them written upon paper*. The King's laws are not promulgated by mouth of herald, but are written upon the *heart*. Do you not perceive that in the narrative Christ bids His servants go and take His royal steed, such as it was, and this was the law, "Loose him and let him go"? But where was the law written? It was written upon the heart of that man to whom the donkey and the foal belonged—for he immediately said, "Let them go," cheerfully and with great joy! He thought it a high honor to contribute to the royal state of this great King of peace. So, brothers and sisters, in the kingdom of Christ you shall see no huge law books, no attorneys, no solicitors, and no barristers who have need to expound the law. The law book is here in the *heart*, the barrister is here in the *conscience*, the law is written no more on parchment, no more promulgated and written, as the Roman decrees were, upon steel and brass—but upon the fleshy tablets of the heart! The human will is subdued to obedience, the human heart is molded to Christ's image, His desire becomes the desire of His subjects, His glory is their chief aim, and His law the very delight of their souls. Strange kingdom this—which needs no law save those which are written upon the hearts of the subjects!

Stranger still, as some will think it, this was a kingdom *in which riches were no part whatever of its glory*. There rides the King; the poorest of the whole state, for yonder King had not where to lay His head! There rides the King, the poorest of them all, upon another man's donkey that He has borrowed! There rides

the King, one who is soon to die—stripped of His robes to die naked and exposed! And yet He is the King of this kingdom, the First, the Prince, the Leader, the crowned One of the whole generation simply because He had the least. He it was who had given most to others, and retained least Himself. He who was least selfish and most self-denying, He who lived most for others, was King of this kingdom! And look at the courtiers, look at the princes! They were all poor, too; they had no flags to hang out the windows, so they cast their poor clothes upon the hedges, or hung them from the windows as He rode along. They had no splendid purple to make a carpet for the feet of His donkey, so they cast their own toil-worn clothes in the way! They strewed along the path, palm branches which they could easily reach from the trees which lined the road, because they had no money with which to bear the expense of a greater triumph. Every way it was a poor thing. No spangles of gold, no flaunting banners, no blowing of silver trumpets, no pomp, no state! It was poverty's own triumph. Poverty enthroned on Poverty's own beast rides through the streets. Strange kingdom this, brethren! I trust we recognize it—a kingdom in which he who is chief among us, is not he that is richest in *gold*—but he that is richest in *faith*; a kingdom which depends on no revenue except the revenue of divine grace. A kingdom which bids every man sit down under its shadow with delight—be he rich or be he poor!

Strange kingdom this! But, brothers and sisters, here is something perhaps yet more exceedingly wonderful—*it was a kingdom without an armed force*. Oh, prince, where are Your soldiers? Is this Your army? These thousands who attend You? Where are their swords? They carry palm branches! Where are their accoutrements? They have almost stripped themselves to pave Your way with their garments! Is this Your host? Are these Your battalions? Oh, strange kingdom, without an army!

Most strange King, who wears no sword, but rides along in this midst of His people conquering and to conquer; strange kingdom in which there is the palm without the sword, the victory without the battle. No blood, no tears, no devastation, no burned cities, no mangled bodies! King of peace! King of peace, this is Your dominion! 'Tis even so in the kingdom over which Christ is King today; there is no force to be used. If the kings of the earth should say to the ministers of Christ, "We will lend you our soldiers," our reply would be, "What can we do with them?—as soldiers they are worthless to us." It was an ill day for the Church when she borrowed the army of that unhallowed heathen, the emperor Constantine, and thought that would make her great. She gained nothing by it save pollution, degradation, and shame! And that Church which asks the civil arm to help it, that Church which would make her Sabbaths binding on the people by force of law, that Church which would have her dogmas proclaimed with beat of drum, and make the fist or the sword to become her weapons, knows not of what spirit she is! These are *carnal* weapons! They are out of place in a *spiritual* kingdom; His armies are loving thoughts; His troops are kind words! The power by which He rules His people is not the strong hand, and the stretched-out arm of police or soldiery, but by deeds of love, and words of overflowing benediction He asserts His sovereign sway!

This was a strange kingdom, too, my brothers and sisters, *because it was without any pomp*. If you call it pomp, what singular pomp it was! When our kings are proclaimed, three strange fellows, the like of whom one would never see at any other time, called heralds, come riding forth to proclaim the king. Strange are their dresses, romantic their costume, and with sound of trumpet, the king is magnificently proclaimed! Then comes the coronation, and how the nation is moved from end to end with transport when the new king is about to be crowned! What

multitudes crowd the streets! Sometimes of old, the fountains were made to flow with wine, and there was scarcely a street which was not hung with tapestry throughout. But here comes the King of kings, the Prince of the kings of the earth—no spotted steed, no prancing horse which would keep at a distance the sons of poverty! He rides upon His donkey, and as He rides along, He speaks kindly to the little children, who are crying, “Hosanna,” and wishes well to the mothers and fathers of the lowest grade, who crowd around Him. He is *approachable*! He is not divided from them! He claims not to be their superior, but *their servant*! No trumpet sounds—He is content with the voice of men; No trappings upon His donkey, but His own disciple’s garments; no pomp but the pomp which loving hearts right willingly yielded to Him. Thus, on He rides; His is the kingdom of *meekness*, the kingdom of *humiliation*. Brothers and sisters, by God’s grace may we belong to that kingdom too; may we feel in our hearts that Christ is come in us to cast down every high and every proud thought, that every valley may be lifted up, and every hill may be abased, and the whole land exalted in that day!

Listen again, and this perhaps is the most striking part of Christ’s kingdom—*He came to establish a kingdom without taxations*. Where were the collectors of the King’s revenue? You say He had not any; yes, He had, but what a revenue it was! Every man willingly took off his garments; He never asked it; His revenue flowed freely from the willing gifts of His people. The first had lent his donkey and his colt, the rest had given their clothes. Those who had scarcely clothes to part with, plucked the branches from the trees, and here was state for once which cost no man anything, or rather for which nothing was demanded of any man, but everything spontaneously given. *This* is the kingdom of Christ—a kingdom which subsists not upon tithe, church-tax, or Easter dues, but a kingdom which lives upon the

free-will offering of the willing people; a kingdom which demands nothing of any man but which comes to him with a stronger force than demand, saying to him, “You are not under the law, but under grace. Will you not, being bought with a price, consecrate yourself and all that you have to the service of the King of kings?” Brothers and sisters, do you think me wild and fanatical in talking of a kingdom of this sort? Indeed, ‘twere fanatical if we said that any mere man could establish such a dominion. But Christ has done it, and this day there are tens of thousands of men in this world who call Him King—and who feel that He is more their King than the ruler of their native land! They give to Him a more sincere homage than they ever give to their beloved sovereign; they feel that His power over them is such as they would not wish to resist—the power of love! They feel that their gifts to Him are all too little, for they wish to give *themselves* away! Marvelous and matchless kingdom! The like shall never be found on earth!

Before I leave this point, I should like to remark that apparently *this was a kingdom in which all creatures were considered*. Why did Christ have *two* beasts? There was a donkey and a colt, the foal of a donkey. He rode on the foal because it had never been ridden before. Now, I have looked at several of the commentators to see what they say about it, and one old commentator has made me laugh—I trust he will not make you laugh, too—by saying that Christ telling His disciples to bring the foal as well as the donkey should teach us your infants ought to be baptized as well as their parents! This seemed to me to be an argument eminently worthy of childish baptism! Thinking the matter over, however, I consider there is a better reason to be given—Christ would not have any pain in His kingdom—He would not have even a donkey suffer by Him, and if the foal had been taken away from its mother, there would have been the poor mother in the stable at home,

thinking of its foal, and there would have been the foal longing to get back, like those oxen that the Philistines used when they took back the ark, and which went lowing as they went, because their calves were at home. Wondrous kingdom of Christ, in which the very beast shall have its share! “For the creature was made subject to vanity by our sin.” It was the beast that suffered because we sinned, and Christ intends that His kingdom should bring back the beast to its own pristine happiness. He would make us merciful, considerate even to the beasts. I believe that when His kingdom fully comes, the animal nature will be put back to its former happiness. “Then shall the lion eat straw like the ox, the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den.” Old Eden’s peacefulness and the familiarity between man and the lower creatures shall come back once more! And even now, wherever the gospel is fully known in man’s heart, man begins to recognize that he has no right wantonly to kill a sparrow or a worm, because it is in Christ’s dominion; and He who would not ride a foal without having its mother by its side, that it might be at peace and happy, would not have any of His disciples think lightly of the mean creature that His hands have made. Blessed kingdom this which considers even the beast! Does God care for oxen? Yes, that He does, and for the very donkey itself, that heir of toil, He cares. Christ’s kingdom, then, shall care for beasts as well as men.

Once more; Christ, in riding through the streets of Jerusalem, taught in a *public* manner, that His kingdom *was to be one of joy*. Brethren, when great conquerors ride through the streets, you often hear of the joy of the people; how the women throw roses on the pathway; how they crowd around the hero of the day, and wave their handkerchiefs to show their appreciation of the deliverance he has worked. The city has

been long besieged; the champion has driven away the besiegers, and the people will now have rest. Fling open wide the gates! Clear the road and let the hero come—let the lowly page that is in his retinue be honored this day for the deliverer's sake! Ah, brothers and sisters, but in those triumphs how many tears there are that are hidden! There is a woman who hears the sound of the bells for victory, and she says, "Ah, victory indeed, but I am a widow and my little ones are orphans." And from the balconies where beauty looks down and smiles, there may be a forgetfulness for the moment of friends and kindred over whom they will soon have to weep—for every battle is with blood, and every conquest is with woe, and every shout of victory has in it weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth! Every sound of the trumpet, because the battle is obtained, does but cover over the cries, the sorrows, and the deep agonies of those who have been bereaved of their kinsfolk! But in Your triumph, Jesus, there were no tears! When the little children cried, "Hosanna," they had not lost their fathers in battle; when the men and women shouted, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord," they had no cause to shout with bated breath, or to mar their joys with the remembrance of misery. No, in His kingdom there is unalloyed, unmingled joy! Shout, shout! You that are subjects of King Jesus! Sorrows you may have, but not from Him; troubles may come to you because you are in the world, but they come not from Him, His service is perfect liberty! His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all His paths are peace—

"Joy to the world, the Savior comes,
The Savior promised long!
Let every heart prepare a tune,
And every voice a song!"

He comes to wipe away your tears and not to make them flow; He comes to lift you from your dunghills and set you upon His throne, to fetch you from your dungeons and make you leap in liberty—

“Blessings abound wherein He reigns,
The prisoner leaps to lose His chains!
The weary find eternal rest,
And all the sons of want are blessed!”

Singular kingdom this!

IV. And now I come to my fourth and last head. The Savior, in His triumphal entrance into the capital of His fathers, declared to us very plainly *the practical effects of His kingdom*. Now what are these? One of the first effects was *that the whole city was moved*. What does that mean? It means that everybody had something to say about it, and that everybody felt something because Christ rode through the street. There were some who leaned from the tops of their houses and looked down the street, and said to one another—“Aha, did you ever see such fool’s play as this? Humph! Here is Jesus of Nazareth down here riding on a donkey! Surely if He meant to be King, He might have chosen a horse. Look at Him! They call that pomp? There is some old fisherman has just thrown down his bad-smelling garment. I dare say it had fish in it an hour or two ago!” “Look,” says one, “look at that old beggar throwing his cap into the air for joy!” “Aha,” they say, “was there ever such a ridiculous thing as that?” I cannot put it in such terms as they would describe it. If I could, I think I would. I should like to make you see how ridiculous this must have seemed to the people. Why, if Pilate himself had heard about it, he would have said—“Ah, there is nothing much to fear from that! There is no fear that that man will ever upset Caesar; there is no fear

that He will ever overturn an army. Where are their swords? There is not a sword among them! They have no cries that sound like rebellion; their songs are only some religious verses taken out of the Psalms. Oh,” he says, “the whole thing is contemptible and ridiculous.” And this was the opinion of a great many in Jerusalem. Perhaps that is your opinion, my friend. The kingdom of Christ, you say, is ridiculous. You do not believe, perhaps, that there are any people who are ruled by Him though we say that we acknowledge Him as our King, and that we feel the law of love to be a law which compels us to sweet obedience. “Oh,” you say, “it is self-righteousness and hypocrisy.” And there are some who attend where they have golden censers, and altars, and priests, and they say, “Oh, a religion that is so simple—singing a few hymns and offering spontaneous prayer!—Ah, give me a bishop with a miter—a fine fellow in long sleeves—that is the thing for me!” “Oh,” says another, “let me hear the peals of the organ! Let me see the thing done scientifically; let me see a little drapery, too; let the man come up clad in his proper garb to show that he is something different from other people; do not let him stand dressed as if he were an ordinary man! Let me see something in the worship different from anything I have seen before.” They need it clothed with a little pomp, and because it is not so, they say—“Ah, humph!” They sneer at it and this is all that Christ gets from multitudes of men who think themselves exceedingly wise! He is to them foolishness, and they pass by with a sneer. Your sneers will be exchanged for tears before long, sirs! When He comes with real pomp and splendor, you will weep and wail—because you disowned the King of Peace—

“The Lord shall come! A dreadful form,
With rainbow wreath and robes of storm!

With cherub voice and wings of wind,
The appointed Judge of all mankind!"

Then, you will find it inconvenient to have treated Him with contempt.

Others, no doubt, there were in Jerusalem who were filled with *curiosity*. They said—"Dear me, whatever can it be? What is the meaning of it? Who is this? I wish you would come," they said to their neighbors, "and tell us the history of this singular man. We would like to know about it." Some of them said, "He is gone to the temple; I dare say He will work a miracle." So off they ran and squeezed and pressed, and thronged to see a marvel. They were like Herod; they longed to see some wonder worked by Him. It was the first day of Christ's coming, too, and of course, the enthusiasm might last some nine days if He would keep it up, so they were very curious about it. And this is all Christ gets from thousands of people! They hear about a revival of religion. Well, they would like to know what it is, and hear about it. There is something doing at such-and-such a place of worship. Well, they would like to go if it were only to see the place. "There is a strange minister who says strange things. Let us go and hear him. We had intended to go out"—you know who I mean among yourselves—"we had intended to go out on an excursion today," you said, "but let us go there instead." Just so, curiosity, curiosity; this is all Christ gets today, and He who died upon the cross becomes a theme for an idle tale! And He who is Lord of angels, and adored of men, is to be talked of as though He were a wizard of the North or some eccentric impostor! Ah, you will find it inconvenient to have treated Him thus, by-and-by, for when He comes, and when every eye shall see Him, you who curiously inquired for Him, shall find that He shall inquire for you—not with animosity but

with Wrath, and it shall be—"Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire."

But among the crowd there were some who were still worse, for they looked on the whole thing with *envy*. "Ah," said Rabbi Simeon to Rabbi Hillel, "the people were never so pleased *with us*. We know a great deal more than that imposter! We have read through all our religious books." "Don't you remember *Him*," asks one, "that when He was a boy, He was rather precocious? You remember He came into the temple and talked with us, and since then He deceives the people," meaning by that He outshone them; that He had more esteem in the hearts of the multitude than they had, though they were far prouder. "Oh," said the Pharisee, "He does not wear any phylactery, and I have made mine very large. I have made my garments almost all borders, so that they may be exceedingly broad." "Ah," says another, "I tithe my mint, my anise, and my cumin, and I stand at the corner of the street and blow a trumpet when I give away a penny—but yet people will not put *me* on a donkey! They will not clap their hands and say, 'Hosanna' to me, but the whole earth is gone after this man like a parcel of children. Besides, think of going into the temple disturbing their betters, disturbing us who are making a show of our pretended prayers and standing in the courts!" And this is what Christ gets from a great many. They do not like to see Christ's cause get on. No, they would have Christ be lean, that they might fatten themselves upon the plunder; they would have His Church be despicable; they like to hear of the falls of Christian ministers. If they can find a fault in a Christian, "Report it, report it, report it," they say. But if a man walks uprightly, if he glorifies Christ, if the Church increases, if souls are saved—straightway there is an uproar, and the whole city is stirred! The whole uproar begins and is carried on by falsehoods, lying accusations, and slanders against the

characters of Christ's people. In some way or other men are sure to be moved; if they are not moved to laugh, if they are not moved to inquire, they are moved to envy!

But blessed is it that some in Jerusalem were moved to *rejoice*. Oh, there were many who, like Simeon and Anna, rejoiced to see that day! Many of them went home and said, "Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen Your salvation." There was many a bedridden woman in the back streets of Jerusalem who sat up in the bed, and said, "Hosanna," and wished that she could get down into the street that she might throw her old mantle in the way, and might bow before Him who was the King of the Jews! There were many weeping eyes that wiped away their tears that day, and many mourning believers who began from that hour to rejoice with unspeakable joy! And so there are some of you who hear of Christ the King with joy! You join in the hymn; not as we have all joined with the voice, but with the heart—

"Rejoice, the Savior reigns,
The God of peace and love!
When He had purged our stains
He took His seat above!
Rejoice, rejoice!
Rejoice aloud, you saints, rejoice!"

Such, then, the first effect of Christ's kingdom! Wherever it comes, the city is stirred. Do not believe the gospel is preached at all if it does not make a stir! Do not believe, my brothers and sisters, that the gospel is preached in Christ's way if it does not make some angry and some happy—if it does not make many enemies and some friends.

There is yet another practical effect of Christ's kingdom. He went up to the temple, and there at one table sat a lot of

men with baskets containing pairs of doves; “Any doves, sir, any doves?” He looked at them and said, “Take these things away!” He spoke with a holy *furor*. There were others changing money as the people came in to pay their half shekel. He overturned the tables, and set them all a-flying, and soon emptied the whole court of all these merchants who were making a gain of godliness, and making religion a stalking-horse for their own profit! Now, this is what Christ does wherever He comes. I wish He would come in the Church of England a little more, and purge out the sale of religious offices, get rid of that accursed simony which is still tolerated by law, and purge out the men who take that which belongs to the ministers of Christ and apply it to their own uses! I would that He would come into all our places of worship, so that once and for all it might be seen that they who serve God serve Him because they *love* Him, and not for what they can get by it! I would that every professor of religion could be quite clean in his own conscience, that he never made a profession to get respectability or to get esteem— but only made it that he might honor Christ, and glorify his Master! The spiritual meaning of it all is this—we have no houses of God now; bricks and mortar are not holy, the places where we worship God are places of worship, but they are not the houses of God any longer than we are in them! We believe no superstition which makes any place holy, but *we* are the temple of God. Men themselves are God’s temples and where Christ comes, He drives out the buyers and sellers; He obliterates all selfishness. I will never believe that Christ, the King, has made your heart His palace till you are unselfish! Oh, how many professors there are who want to get so many honors, so much respect! As to giving to the poor, thinking it more blessed to give than to receive, as for feeding the hungry and clothing the naked, as for living for other people and not for themselves—they do not think of those things! O Master,

come into Your temple, and drive out our selfishness. Now! Come! Help us to live unto You, and to live for others by living to You, and not live unto ourselves.

The last practical effect of our Lord Jesus Christ's kingdom was, He held a grand reception. He had, if I may so speak, a drawing-room day! And who were the people who came to attend Him? Now, you courtiers, the disciples, show us your nobility and gentry who are come to wait upon Him. Here comes one man, he has a bandage over here, and the other eye has almost failed—show him in! Here comes another, his feet are all twisted and contorted—show him in! Here comes another limping on two crutches, both his limbs are disabled, and here is another who has lost his limbs. Here they come and here is the reception. The King himself comes here and holds a grand meeting, and the blind and the lame are His guests—and now He comes! He touches that blind eye and light shines in! He speaks to this man with a withered leg—he walks! He touches two eyes at once, and they both see! To another He says, “I will take away your crutches; stand upright and rejoice, and leap with joy.” This is what the King does wherever He comes! Come here this morning, I beseech You, You great King! There are blind eyes here that cannot see Your beauty! Walk, Jesus, walk among this crowd, and touch the eyes. Ah, then, brothers and sisters, if He should do that, you will say, “There is a beauty in Him that I never saw before.” Jesus, touch their eyes, they cannot take away their own blindness; You do it! Help them to look to You hanging upon the cross! They cannot do it unless You enable them! May they do it now, and find life in You! O Jesus, there are some here who are lame—knees that cannot bend—they have never prayed! There are some here whose feet will not run in the way of Your commandments—feet that will not carry them up where Your name is praised, and where You are had in honor. Walk, great

King, walk in solemn pomp throughout this house and make it like the temple of old! Display here Your power, and hold Your grand meeting in the healing of the lame, and the curing of the blind!

“Oh,” says one, “I would that He would open my blind eyes.” Soul, He will do it, He will do it! Breathe your prayer out now, and it shall be done, for He is near you now. He is standing by your side. He speaks to you, and He says—“Look unto Me, and be you saved, you vilest of the vile.” There is another, and he says, “Lord, I would be made whole.” He says, “Be you whole then.” Believe on Him and He will save you! He is near you, brothers and sisters, He is near you! He is not in the pulpit more than He is in the pew, nor in one pew more than in another. Say not, “Who shall go to heaven to find Him, or into the depths to bring Him up?” He is near you! He will hear your prayer even though you speak not. He will hear your *heart* speak! Oh, say unto Him, “Jesus, heal me,” and He will do it. He will do it now! Let us breathe the prayer, and then we will part.

Jesus, heal us! Save us, Son of David, save us! You see how blind we are—oh, give us the sight of faith! You see how lame we are—oh, give us the strength of grace! And now, even now, Son of David, purge out our selfishness and come and live, and reign in us as in Your temple palaces! We ask it, O great King, for Your own sake. Amen.

And before we leave this place, we cry again, “Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.”

406 THE INFALLIBILITY OF GOD'S PURPOSE – JOB 23:13

**A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Morning, August 25th, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“But He is of one mind, and who can make Him change?
And whatever His soul desires, that He does.” — Job 23:13**

IT IS VERY ADVANTAGEOUS to the Christian mind to frequently consider the deep and unsearchable attributes of God. The beneficial effect is tangible in two ways, exerting a sacred influence both on the judgment and the heart. In respect to the one, it tends to confirm us in those good old orthodox doctrines which lie as the basis of our faith. If we study man, and make him the only object of our research, there will be a strong tendency in our minds to exaggerate his importance. We shall think too much of the creature and too little of the Creator, preferring that knowledge which is to be found by observation and reason, to that divine truth which revelation alone could make known to us. The basis and groundwork of Arminian theology lies in attaching undue importance to man, and giving God the second place rather than the first. Let your mind dwell for a long time upon man as a free agent, upon man as a responsible being, upon man, not so much as being under God's claims, as having claims upon God, and you will soon find in your thoughts a set of crude doctrines. You will support these doctrines with the letter of some few isolated texts in

Scripture which may be speciously quoted, but, which really in spirit are contrary to the whole tenor of the Word of God! Thus your orthodoxy will be shaken to its very foundations, and your soul will be driven out to sea without peace or joy. brothers and sisters, I am not afraid that any man, who thinks worthily about the Creator, stands in awe of His adorable perfections, and sees Him sitting upon the throne doing all things according to the counsel of His will, will go far wrong in his doctrinal sentiments. He may say, “My heart is fixed, O God” and when the heart is fixed with a firm conviction of the greatness, the omnipotence, the divinity of Him whom we call God, the head will not wander far from truth! Another happy result of such meditation is the steady peace, the grateful calm it gives to the soul. Have you been a long time at sea, and has the continual motion of the ship sickened and disturbed you? Have you come to look upon everything as moving, till you scarcely put one foot before the other without the fear of falling down, because the floor rocks beneath your path? With what delight do you put your feet at last upon the shore and say, “Ah, this does not move! This is solid ground. Though the tempest howls, this island is safely moored. She will not start from her bearings; when I tread on her she will not yield beneath my feet.” Just so is it with us when we turn from the ever-shifting, often boisterous tide of earthly things to take refuge in the Eternal God who has been “our dwelling place in all generations.” The fleeting things of human life, and the fickle thoughts and showy deeds of men are as moveable and changeable as the waters of the treacherous deep; but, when we mount up, as it were, with eagles’ wings to Him who sits upon the circle of the earth—before whom all its inhabitants are as grasshoppers—we nestle in the Rock of Ages which from its eternal socket never starts, and in its fixed immovability never can be disturbed!

Or to use another simile; you have seen little children running round and round, and round till they get giddy; they stand still a moment, and everything seems to be flying round about them, but by holding fast and still, and getting into the mind, the fact that, that to which they hold at least is firm, at last the world grows still again, and the world ceases to whirl. So you and I have been these six days like little children running round in circles, and everything has been moving with us, till perhaps, as we came to this place this morning, we felt as if the very promises of God had moved, as if providence had shifted, our friends had died, our kindred passed away, and we came to look on everything as whirling—nothing firm, nothing fixed. Brothers and sisters, let us get a good grip today of the immutability of God! Let us stand still awhile, and know that the Lord is God. We shall see at length that things do not move as we dreamed they did—"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heavens." There is still fixedness in that which seems most fickle. That which appears to be most dreamy has a reality, inasmuch, as it is a part of that divinely substantial scheme which God is working out, the end whereof, shall be His eternal glory! It will cool your brain, it will calm your heart, my brothers and sisters; it will make you go back to the world's fight, quiet and composed! It will make you stand fast in the day of temptation, if now, through divine grace, you can come near to God, who is without variableness or shadow of a turning, and offer Him the tribute of your devotion.

The text will be considered by us this morning—first, as enunciating a great general truth; and, secondly, out of that general truth, we shall fetch another, upon which we shall enlarge, I trust, to our comfort.

I. The text may be regarded as **TEACHING A GENERAL TRUTH.** We will take the first clause of the sentence, “He is of one mind.”

1. Now, the fact taught here is, that in all the acts of God in providence, He has a fixed and a settled purpose. “He is of one mind.” It is eminently consolatory to us, who are God’s creatures, to know that He did not make us without a purpose, and that now, in all His dealings with us, He has the same wise and gracious end to be served. We suffer; the head aches; the heart leaps with palpitations; the blood creeps sluggishly along, where its healthy flow should have been more rapid. We lose our limbs, crushed by accident; some sense fails us; the eyes are eclipsed in perpetual night; our mind is racked and disturbed; our fortunes vary; our goods disappear before our eyes; our children, portions of ourselves, sicken and die. Our crosses are as continual as our lives; we are seldom long at ease; we are born to sorrow, and certainly it is an inheritance of which we are never deprived; we suffer continually. Will it not reconcile us to our sorrows, that they serve some end? To be scourged needlessly, we consider to be a disgrace, but, to be scourged if our country were to be served, we should consider an honor, because there is a purpose in it. To suffer the maiming of our bodies, because of some whim of a tyrant, would be a thing hard to bear, but if we administer thereby, to the happiness of our families, or to the glory of our God, we would be content not to be mutilated once, but, to be cut piecemeal away so that His great purpose might be answered! O, believer, always look, then, on all your sufferings as being parts of the divine plan, and say, as wave upon wave rolls over you, “He is of one mind!” He is still carrying out His one great purpose! None of these comes by chance; none of these happens to us out of order, but everything comes to us according to the purpose of His own will, and answers the purpose of His own great mind. We

have to labor, too. How hard do some men labor who have to toil for their daily bread! Their bread is saturated with their sweat; they wear no garment which they have not woven out of their own nerves and muscles. How sternly, too, do others labor who have with their brain to serve their fellowmen or their God! How have some heroic missionaries spent themselves, and been spent in their fond enterprise! How have many ministers of Christ exhausted not simply the body, but the mind! Their hilarity, so natural to them, has given place to despondency, and the natural effervescence of their spirits has at last died out into oneness of soul, through the desperateness of their ardor. Well, and sometimes this labor for God is unrequited. We plow, but the furrow yields no harvest. We sow, but the field refuses the grain, and the devouring bellies of the hungry birds alone are satisfied therewith! We build, but the storm casts down the stones which we had quarried, with Herculean efforts, piling one on another. We sweat, we toil, we fail. How often do we come back weeping because we have toiled, as we think, without success!

Yet, Christian, you have not been without success, for "He is of one mind." All this was necessary to the fulfillment of His one purpose! You are not lost; your labor has not rotted under the clods. All, though you see it not, has been working together towards the desired end! Stand upon the beach for a moment. A wave has just come up careening in its pride. Its crown of froth is spent. As it leaps beyond its fellow, it dies. It dies. And now another, and it dies, and now another, and it dies. Oh, weep not, deep sea! Be not sorrowful, for though each wave dies, yet you prevail! O mighty ocean! Onward does the flood advance till it has covered all the sand, and washed the feet of the white cliffs! So is it with God's purpose. You and I are only waves of His great sea; we wash up, we seem to retire as if there had been no advance. Another wave comes, still each wave

must retire as though there had been no progress; but, the great divine sea of His purpose is still moving on. He is still unique and carrying out His plan! How sorrowful it often seems, to think how good men die! They learn through the days of their youth, and often before they come to years to use their learning, they are gone. The blade is made and tempered in many a fire, but before the foeman uses it, it snaps! How many laborers, too, in the Master's vineyard, who when by their experience they were getting more useful than ever, have been taken away just when the Church needed them most? He that stood upright in the chariot guiding the steeds, suddenly falls back, and we cry, "My Father, my Father, the horsemen of Israel and the chariot thereof!" Still notwithstanding all, we may console ourselves in the midst of our grief, with the blessed reflection, that everything is a part of God's plan. He is still unique—nothing happens which is not a part of the divine scheme! To enlarge our thoughts a moment, have you ever noticed, in reading history, how nations suddenly decay? When their civilization has advanced so far, that we thought it would produce men of the highest mold, suddenly old age begins to wrinkle its brow, its arm grows weak, the scepter falls, and the crown drops from the head, and we have to say, "Is not the world gone back again?" The barbarian has sacked the city, and where once everything was beauty, now there is nothing but ruthless bloodshed and destruction! But, my brothers and sisters, all those things were but the carrying out of the divine plan! Just as you may have seen sometimes upon the hard rock the lichen spring—as soon as the lichen grows grand—it dies. But why? It is because its death prepares the moss, and the moss which is feebler compared with the lichen growth, at last increases till you see before you the finest specimens of that genus. But then the moss decays. Yet, weep not for its decaying; its ashes shall prepare a soil for some plants of a little higher growth, and as

these decay, one after another, race after race, they at last prepare the soil, upon which even the goodly cedar itself, might stretch out its roots!

And so has it been with the race of men—Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Greece, and Rome have crumbled, each and all—when their hour had come, to be succeeded by a better. And if this race of ours should ever be eclipsed, if the Anglo Saxons' boasted pride should yet be stained, even then, it will prove to be a link in the divine purpose. Still, in the end, His one mind shall be carried out; His one great result shall be thereby achieved. Not only the decay of nations, but the apparent degeneration of some races of men—and even the total extinction of others—forms a part of the fixed purpose of God! In all those cases there may be reasons of sorrow, but faith sees grounds of rejoicing. To gather up all in one, the calamities of earthquake, the devastations of storm, the exterminations of war, and all the terrible catastrophes of plague have only been co-workers with God—slaves compelled to tug the galley of the divine purpose across the sea of time! From every evil, good has come, and the more the evil has accumulated, the more has God glorified Himself in bringing out at last His grand, His everlasting design! This, I take it, is the first general lesson of the text—in every event of providence, God has a purpose. “He is of one mind.” Mark, not only a purpose, but only *one* purpose—for all history is but one! There are many scenes, but it is one drama; there are many pages, but it is one book; there are many leaves, but it is one tree; there are many provinces, yes, and there are many lords and rulers, yet, there is but one empire, and God is the only Potentate! “O, come let us worship and bow down before Him—for the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods!”

2. “Who can make Him change?” This is the second clause of the sentence, and here I think we are taught the *doctrine that*

the purpose of God is unchanged. The first sentence shows that He has a purpose, the second shows that it is incapable of change. “Who can make Him change?” There are some shallow thinkers who dream that the great plan and design of God was thrown out of order by the fall of man. The fall they consider all accidental circumstances—not intended in the divine plan, and so, God being placed in a delicate predicament of requiring to sacrifice His justice or His mercy, used the plan of the Atonement of Christ as an expedient. Brothers and sisters, it may be lawful to use such terms—it may be lawful to you—it would not be to me! For am I persuaded that the very fall of man was a part of the divine purpose—that even the sin of Adam, though he did it freely—was, nevertheless, contemplated in the divine scheme, and was, by no means, such a thing as to involve a digression from His primary plan! Then came the deluge and the race of man was swept away, but God’s purpose was not affected by the destruction of the race. In later years His people Israel forsook Him and worshipped Baal and Ashtoreth, but His purpose was not changed any more by the defection of His chosen nation, than by the destruction of His creatures! And when later the gospel was sent to the Jews, and they resisted it and Paul and Peter turned to the Gentiles, do not suppose that God had to take down His book and make an erasure or an amendment! No, the whole was written there from the *beginning!* He knew everything of it—He has never altered a single sentence nor changed a single line of the divine purpose! What He intended the great picture to be—that it shall be at the end! And where you see some black strokes which seem not in keeping, these shall yet be toned down; and where there are some brighter dashes, too bright for the somber picture, these shall yet be brought into harmony. And when in the end God shall exhibit the whole, He shall elicit both from men and angels tremendous shouts of praise, while

they say, "Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are Your ways, You King of Saints! You only are holy. All nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments are made manifest."

Where we have thought His government wrong, there shall it prove most right, and where we dreamed He had forgotten to be good, there shall His goodness be most clear! It is a sweet consolation to the mind of one who muses much upon these deep matters that God has never changed in any degree from His purpose; and the result will be, notwithstanding everything to the contrary, just precisely in every jot and tittle, what He foreknew and foreordained it should be! Wars may rise and other Alexanders and Caesars may spring up, but He will not change! Now, nations and peoples lift up yourselves and let your parliaments pass your decrees, but He changes not! Now, rebels, foam at the mouth and let your fury boil, but He changes not for you! Oh, nations and peoples and tongues—and you round earth—you still spin on your orbit, and all the fury of your inhabitants cannot make you move from your predestinated pathway! Creation is an arrow from the bow of God, and that arrow goes on, straight on, without deviation to the center of that target which God ordained that it should strike. His plan is never varied! He is without variableness or shadow of a turning. Albert Barnes very justly says, "It is, when properly understood, a matter of unspeakable consolation that God has a plan—for who could honor a God who had no plan—who did everything haphazardly? It is matter of rejoicing that He has one great purpose which extends through all ages, and embraces all things, for then everything falls into its proper place, and has its appropriate bearing on other events. It is a matter of joy that God does execute all His purposes—for as they are all good and wise—it is *desirable* that they should be executed! It would be a calamity if a good plan were not

executed. Why, then, should men murmur at the purposes or the Decrees of God?"

3. The text also teaches a third general truth of God. While God had a purpose, and that purpose has never changed, the third clause teaches us that *this purpose is sure to be effected*. "Whatever His soul desires, that He does"; He made the world out of nothing; there was no resistance there. "Light be," He said, and light was. There was no resistance there. "Providence be," said He, and providence shall be. And when you shall come to see the end as well as the beginning, you shall find that there was no resistance there. It is a wonderful thing how God effects His purpose while still the *creature is free*. They who think that predestination and the fulfillment of the divine purpose is contrary to the free agency of man, know not what they say, nor what they affirm. It were no miracle for God to effect His own purpose if He were dealing with sticks and stones, with granite and with trees—but this is the miracle of miracles—that the *creatures are free*, absolutely free, and still the divine purpose stands! Herein is wisdom! This is a deep unsearchable mystery. Man walks without a leash, yet, treads in the very steps which God ordained him to tread in, as certainly as though manacles had bound him to the spot! Man chooses his own seat, selects his own position, guided by his will he chooses sin, or guided by divine grace he chooses right, and yet, in his choice, God sits as sovereign on the throne; not disturbing, but still overruling, and proving Himself to be able to deal as well with free creatures, as with creatures without freedom, as able to effect His purpose when He has endowed men with thought and reason, and judgment, as when He had only to deal with the solid rocks and with the imbedded sea! O Christians! You shall never be able to fathom this, but, you may wonder at it. I know there is an easy way of getting out of this great deep—either by denying predestination altogether, or by denying free

agency altogether—but, if you can hold the two, if you can say, “Yes, my consciousness teaches me that man does as he wills, but my faith teaches me that God does as He wills, and these two are not contrary, the one to the other, and yet, I cannot tell how it is. I cannot tell how God effects His end. I can only wonder and admire, and say, ‘O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out.’” Every creature free and doing as it wills, yet, God more free still, and doing as He wills—not only in heaven, but among the inhabitants of this lower earth! I have thus given you a general subject upon which I would invite you to spend your meditations in your quiet hours. I am persuaded that sometimes to think of these deep doctrines will be found very profitable. It will be to you like the advice of Christ to Simon Peter, “Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.” You shall have a draught of exceedingly great thoughts, and exceedingly great graces if you dare to launch out into this exceedingly deep sea, and let out the nets of your contemplation at the command of Christ! “Behold, God is great.” “O Lord, how great are Your works, and Your thoughts are very deep! A brutish man knows not, neither does a fool understand this.”

II. I now come to the second part of my subject, which will be, I trust, cheering to the people of God. From the general doctrine that God has a plan, that this plan is invariable, and that this plan is certain to be carried out, I draw the most precious doctrine that **IN SALVATION GOD IS OF ONE MIND**—and who can make Him change? And what His heart desires, that He does. Now, mark, I address myself at this hour, only to you who are the people of God. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart? Is the spirit of adoption given to you whereby you can say, “Abba, Father”? If so, draw near, for this truth is for you!

Come then, my brothers and sisters—in the first place, let us consider that *God is of one mind*. Of old, my soul, He determined to save you. Your calling proves your election, and your election teaches you that God ordained to save you. He is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent. He is of one mind. He saw you ruined in the fall of your father Adam, but His mind never changed from His purpose to save you. He saw you in your nativity. You went away from the womb speaking lies. Your youthful follies and disobedience He saw, but never did that gracious mind alter in its designs of love to you. Then in your manhood you did plunge into vice and sin. Cover, O darkness, all our guilt, and let the night conceal it from our eyes forever! Though we added sin to sin, and our pride waxed exceedingly high and hot, yet, He was of one mind—

“Determined to save,
He watched over my path
When Satan’s blind slave,
I sported with death.”

At last, when the happy hour arrived, He came to our door and knocked and He said, “Open to Me.” And do you remember, O my brothers and sisters, how we said, “Go away, O Jesus! We want You not”? We scorned His grace, defied His love, but He was of one mind, and no hardness of heart could turn Him. He had determined to have us for His spouse, and He would not take “No” for an answer! He said He would have us, and He persevered. He knocked again, and do you remember how we half opened the door? But then, some strong temptation came, and we shut it in His very face, and He said, “Open to Me, my dove, My head is wet with the dew, and My locks with the drops of the night”—yet, we bolted and

barred the door, and would not let Him in. But, He was of one mind and none could turn Him. Oh, my soul weeps now, when I think of the many convictions that I stifled, of the many movings of His Spirit that I rejected, and those many times when conscience bade me repent, and urged me to flee to Him but I would not! My souls weeps when I think of those seasons when a mother's tears united with all the intercession of the Savior, yet, my heart was harder than granite, and I refused to move, and would not yield. But, He was of one mind. He had no fickleness in Him. He said He would have us, and have us He would! He had written our names in His book, and He would not cross them out. It was His solemn purpose that yield we should. And O, that hour when, by His grace, we yielded at last! Then did He prove that in all our wanderings, He had been of one mind!

And O, since then, how sorrowful the reflection! Since then, how often have you and I turned? We have backslidden, and if we had the Arminian's god to deal with, we should either have been in hell or out of the covenant at this hour! I know I would be in the covenant and out of the covenant a hundred times a day, if I had a god who put me out every time I sinned, and then restored me when I repented. But no, despite our sin, our unbelief, our backslidings, our forgetfulness of Him, He was of one mind! And brothers and sisters, I know this, that though we shall still wander, though in dark hours you and I may slip and often fall, yet, His loving-kindness changes not! Your strong arm, O God, shall bear us on; Your loving heart will never fail; You will not turn Your love away from us, or make it cease, or pour upon us Your fierce anger—but having begun, You will complete the triumphs of Your grace. Nothing shall make You change Your mind! What joy is this to you, believers? For your mind changes every day; your experience varies like the wind, and if salvation were to be the result of any

purpose on your part, certainly it never would be! But since it is God's work to save, and we have proved that He is of one mind, our faith shall revel in the thought that, He will be of one thought, even to the end—till all on glory's summit we shall sing of that fixed purpose, and that immutable love, which never turned aside until the deed of divine grace was triumphantly achieved!

Now, believer, listen to the second lesson—*“Who can make Him change?”* While He is Immutable from within, He is immovable from without. “Who can make Him change?” That is a splendid picture presented to us by Moses in the Book of Numbers. The children of Israel were encamped in the plains of Moab. Quietly and calmly they were resting in the valley—the tabernacle of the Lord in their midst and the pillar of cloud spread over them as a shield. But, on the mountain range there were two men—Balak, the son of Zippor, king of the Moabites, and Balaam the prophet of Pethor. They had built seven altars and offered seven bullocks, and Balak said unto Balaam, “Come, curse me Jacob, come, and defy Israel.” Four times did the prophet take up his parable. Four times did he use his enchantments, offering the sacrifices of God on the altars of Baal. Four times did he vainly attempt a false divination. But, I would have you mark, that in each succeeding vision, the mind of God is brought out in deeper characters. First, Balaam confesses his own impotence, “How shall I curse whom God has not cursed? How shall I defy whom the Lord has not defied?” Then the second oracle brings out more distinctly the divine blessing, “Behold, I have received commandment to bless—and He has blessed and I cannot reverse it.” A third audacious attempt is not with a heavier repulse, for the stifled curse recoils on them—“Blessed is he that blesses you, and cursed is he that curses you.” Once again, in the vision that closes the picture, the eyes of Balaam are opened till he gets a

glimpse of the Star that should come out of Jacob, and the Scepter that shall rise out of Israel, with the dawning glory of the latter days. Well might Balaam say, "There is no enchantment against Jacob, no divination against Israel." And now, transfer that picture in your mind to all your enemies, and especially to that arch-fiend of hell. He comes before God today with the remembrance of your sins, and he desires that he may curse Israel, but, he has found a hundred times that there is no enchantment against Jacob, nor divination against Israel! He took David into the sin of lust, and he found that God would not curse him there, but bless him with a sorrowful chastisement, and with a deep repentance. He took Peter into the sin of denying his Master, and he denied Him with oaths and curses. But, the Lord would not curse him, even there, but turned and looked on Peter, not with a lightning glance that might have splintered him, but with a look of love that made him weep bitterly. He has taken you and me many times into positions of unbelief, and we have doubted God. Satan said—"Surely, surely God will curse him there," but never once has He done it! He has smitten, but the blow was full of love! He has chastised, but the chastisement was filled with mercy! He has not cursed us, nor will He. You cannot turn God's mind! Then, fiend of hell, your enchantments cannot prosper; your accusations shall not prevail. "He is of one mind, who can make Him change?"

And brothers and sisters, you know when men are turned, they are sometimes turned by advice. Now, who can advise God? Who shall counsel the Most High to cast off the darlings of His bosom or persuade the Savior to reject His spouse? Such counsel offered was blasphemy, and it would be repugnant to His soul. Or else men are turned by entreaties. But, how shall God listen to the entreaties of the evil one? Are not the prayers of the wicked an abomination to the Lord? Let them pray

against us—let them entreat the Lord to curse us; but He is of one mind, and no revengeful prayer can change the purpose of His love! Sometimes men are changed by the ties of relationships—a mother interposes and man yields—but, in our case, who can interpose? God's only begotten Son is as much concerned in our salvation as His Father, and instead of interposing to change, He would—if such a thing were needed—still continue to plead that the love and mercy of God might never be withdrawn. Oh, let us rejoice in this—

“Midst all our sin, and care and woe,
His Spirit will not let us go!”

The Lord will not forsake His people for His great name's sake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you His people. “He is of one mind, and who can make Him change?”

I know not how it is, but, I feel that I cannot preach from this text as I would like. But oh, the text itself is music to my ears! It seems to sound like the martial trumpet of the battle, and my soul is ready for the fray. It seems, now, that if trials and troubles should come—if I could but hold my hand upon this precious text—I would laugh at them all! “Who can make Him change?”—I would shout—“Who can make Him change?” Come on, earth and hell, come on—for “who can make Him change?” Come on, you boisterous troubles, come on, you innumerable temptations, come on, slanderer and liar, “who can make Him change?” And since He cannot be changed, my soul must and will rejoice “with joy unspeakable and full of glory!” I wish I could throw the text like a bombshell into the midst of the army of doubters, that that army might be routed at once, for when we get a text like this; it must be the *text* which takes effect, and not our explanation! This surely is a

most marvelous deathblow to our doubts and fears. "He is of one mind, and who can make Him change?"

And now, with a few words upon the last sentence I shall conclude—*God's purpose must be effected*—"Whatever His soul desires, that He does." Beloved, what God's soul desires is *your salvation and mine*—if we are His chosen. Well, that He does. Part of that salvation consists in our perfect sanctification. We have had a long struggle with inbred sin, and as far as we can judge, we have not made much progress. Still is the Philistine in the land, and still do the Canaanites invade us. We still sin, and our hearts still have in them unbelief and proneness to depart from the living God. Can you think it possible that you will ever be without any tendency to sin? Does it not seem a dream that you should ever be without fault before the throne of God—without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing? But yet, you shall be! His heart desires it, and that He does. He would have His spouse without any defilement. He would have His chosen generation without anything to mar their perfection. Now, inasmuch as He spoke and it was done, He has but to speak and it shall be done with you. You cannot rout your foes, but He can. You cannot overcome your besetting sins, but He can do it! You cannot drive out your corruptions, for they have chariots of iron, but He will drive out the last of them till the whole land shall be without one enemy to disturb its perpetual peace. O what a joy to know that it will be before long! Oh, it will be so soon with some of us—just a few weeks—though we perhaps are planning on years of life! A few weeks, or a few days, and we shall have passed through Jordan's flood and stand complete in Him, accepted in the beloved! And should it be many years—should we be spared till the snows of a century shall have fallen upon our frosted hair—yet, even then, we must not doubt that His purpose shall at last be fulfilled. We

shall be spotless and faultless, and unblameable in His sight before long.

Another part of our salvation is that we should at last be without pain, without sorrow—gathered with the Church of the first-born before the Father's face. Does it not seem, when you sit down to think of yourself as being in heaven, as a pretty dream that will never be true? What? Shall these fingers one day smite the strings of a golden harp? O aching head! Shall you one day wear a crown of glory that fades not away? O toil-worn body! Shall you bathe yourself in seas of heavenly rest? Is not heaven too good for us, brothers and sisters? Can it be that we, poor we, shall ever get inside those pearly gates or tread the golden streets? Oh, shall we ever see His face? Will He ever kiss us with the kisses of His lips? Will the King immortal, invisible, the only wise God, our Savior, take us to His bosom, and call us all His own? Oh, shall we ever drink out of the rivers of pleasure that are at the right hand of the Most High? Shall we be among that happy company who shall be led to the living fountains of waters, and all tears be wiped away from our eyes? Ah, that we shall be! For “He is of one mind, and who can make Him change? And what His soul desires, that He does.” “Father, I will that they whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory.” That is an immortal omnipotent desire! We shall be with Him where He is! His purpose shall be, and we shall partake of His bliss! Now rise, you who love the Savior, and put your trust in Him—rise like men who have God within you, and sit no longer down upon your dunghills. Come, you desponding ones. If salvation were to be your own work, you might despair—but, since it is His, and He changes not, you must not ever doubt—

“Now let the feeble all be strong,
And make Jehovah's power their song;

His shield is spread o'er every saint.
And thus supported, who can faint?"

If you perish—even the weakest of you—God's purpose cannot be effected! If you finally fall, His honor will be stained! If you perish, heaven itself will be dishonored—Christ will have lost one of His members—He will be a king whose regalia has been stolen! No, He will not be complete Himself—for the Church is His fullness—and how can He be full, if a part of His fullness shall be cast away? Putting these things together, let us take courage, and in the name of God let us set up our banners. He that has been with us up to now will preserve us to the end, and we shall soon sing in the fruition of glory, as we now recite in the confidence of faith—that His purpose is completed, and His love Immutable!

I say by way of closing, such a subject ought to inspire every man and woman with awe. I speak to some here who are unconverted. It is an awful thought—God's purpose will be subserved in you. You may hate Him, but as He got honor upon Pharaoh, and all his hosts, so will He upon you. You may think that you will spoil His designs—that shall be your idea, but your very acts, though guided with that intent, shall only tend to subserve His glory. Think of that! To rebel against God is useless, for you cannot prevail. To resist Him is not only impertinence, but folly. He will be as much glorified by you, whichever way you go. You shall either yield Him willing honor or *unwilling honor*—but, either way, His purpose in you shall most certainly be subserved. O that this thought might make you bow your heads and say, "Great God, glorify Your mercy in me, for I have revolted. Show that You can forgive! I have sinned, deeply sinned. Prove the depths of Your mercy by pardoning me. I know that Jesus died, and that He is set forth as a propitiator. I believe on Him as such. O God, I trust Him;

I pray You will glorify Yourself in me, by showing what Your grace can do in casting sin behind Your back, and blotting out iniquity, transgression and sin!” Sinner, He will do it. He will do it! If thus you plead and thus you pray, He will do it! There was never a sinner rejected yet, that came to God with humble prayer and faith. Go to God today. Confess your sin and take hold of Christ as upon the horns of the altar of mercy, and of sacrifice. If you do, you shall find that it was a part of the divine plan to bring you here today, to strike your mind with awe, to lead you humbly to the cross, to lead you afterwards joyfully to your God—and to bring you perfect at last before His throne!

God add His blessing for Christ's sake! Amen.

407 NATURAL OR SPIRITUAL – I COR. 2:14

A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Morning, September 1st, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned.” — I Corinthians 2:14

THE APOSTLE PAUL knows of only two classes of men—natural and spiritual. Before his eyes, all other distinctions are extinguished. Barbarian or Scythian, bond or free, male or female, circumcision or uncircumcision—all these varieties among men are mere accidents in his esteem. He does not stay to divide men according to the symptoms of their nature. They may be devout men, such as make a profession of godliness, men of morality, men who have commenced sin, or men who have become adept in it. He knows better than merely to judge men by their symptoms; he takes either their diseased state or their healthy state, and so divides them. He lays the axe at the root of the tree, and doing so, he perceives only two classes of men—the natural and the spiritual. Under the term “natural,” the apostle includes all those persons who are not partakers of the Spirit of God; it matters not how excellent, how estimable, how intelligent, how instructed they may be. If the Spirit of God has not given to them a new and higher nature than they ever possessed by their creature birth, he puts them all down at once in the list of natural men. They are what they are by nature.

They never professed to have received the Spirit of God. He puts them down, therefore, as natural men. On the other hand, all into whom the Spirit of God has come, breathing into them a new and diviner life, he puts down under the other head of spiritual men. They may be as yet but babes in grace; their faith may be weak; their love may be but in its early bud; as yet their spiritual senses may be little exercised, perhaps their faults may be in excess of their virtues, but inasmuch as the root of the matter is in them, and they have passed from death unto life, out of the region of nature into that which is beyond nature—the kingdom of grace—he puts them down also, all of them, in one list, as spiritual men. And then he goes on to affirm concerning natural men—those who are not partakers of the Spirit—that the truths of God, which are spiritual, they do not and cannot receive. He teaches that it is utterly impossible that they ever should receive them unless lifted out of that class of natural men, and transformed by the Spirit's work into spiritual men. This change, however, being effected, they will not only receive the things of the Spirit, but embrace them with delight, feed upon them with intense satisfaction, and eventually rise into that state of glory which is next beyond the state of grace!

This morning, I propose—and O that God the Holy Spirit may bear witness in our hearts—I propose, first of all, to dwell a little while upon the great truth that *natural men do not receive the things of the Spirit of God, but count them foolishness*. In the second place, I shall show, for a moment only, that *the reason of the rejection of the things of God cannot be because they are really foolish, for they are not so*. Thirdly, we shall come to the inference that *the reason why the natural man rejects the things of God, is to be found in him alone*; and then, fourthly, we shall consider *the practical lessons which the whole subject teaches*.

I. First, then, it is a well-known fact, and one which can be proved by everyday observation, that **THE NATURAL MAN RECEIVES NOT THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD.**

Mark, we lay this down as a *rule*. We do not say that the drunken or debauched natural man receives not the things of God. That is true; but we also insist upon it that the delicate and the refined natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God. I do not pick out some one case, and say the uneducated, illiterate, coarse, low-minded natural man cannot comprehend spiritual things; but all alike—the most intelligent, enlightened, and trained natural men—do not, and cannot, and will not comprehend the things of the Spirit of God. Like our apostle, we take a wide range, and do not leave out one. However amiable in natural temperament, however well trained by the best parental associations, however kept in check by the most excellent position in Providence, however patriotic, however self-denying, however benevolent, however estimable in all other respects—the natural man does not, and *cannot* receive the things of the Spirit of God!

Now, look around and search for the facts which prove the truth of this. How many natural men are there, and such as you would call good men, too, in some ways, who *violently oppose* the things of the Spirit of God? They do not believe them; no, they say they are a lie. They cannot understand how men should be simpletons enough to believe such ridiculous things. They honestly imagine that they would be snapping the chains of priestcraft, and unrivetting the fetters of superstition, if they would come forward and attempt to prove that these spiritual things are a mere delusion! There, gentlemen, we have lived to see you, under a profession of religion, actually oppose those spiritual things which this religion teaches. We have lived to see what we scarcely ever dreamed to be possible—clergymen of the Church of England themselves denying the truths which

they swore they would defend, and in their “Essays and Reviews” seeking to cast down those spiritual things which once they professed to have understood when they claimed to have received the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the hands of their bishop! We have not only in these times opened and avowed infidel lecturers who, like honest men, deny everything openly, but we have the hypocritical Christian infidel who, like a dishonest thief and wolf in sheep’s clothing, willing always to take the gain of godliness, denies godliness itself! Perhaps it was left for this age to permit wickedness to culminate to the highest, and to see the growth of the vilest hypocrisy that ever appeared among the sons of men! We have had abundant proof that men of the most scientific minds—persons who have been exceedingly inquiring, men who have trod the realms of knowledge, and gone even to the seventh heaven of wisdom—that these have, nevertheless, proved that they could not receive the things of the kingdom of God by their determined opposition and enmity against anything like the truth as it is in Jesus! When you hear them blaspheming the holy name of Christ, when you hear them bringing what they call “scientific facts” against the truth of revelation, be not amazed as though it were some new thing, but write this down in your memorandum book—the Holy Spirit said of old— “The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God,” and these men live to prove that what the Spirit of God said is the very truth of God!

There are a greater proportion of persons who do not so much oppose violently, as more *secretly despise and condemn*. Well, they tell us, they dare say that the Christian religion is a very good thing for some people, and especially for old women, and for persons who are on the borders of the grave. But they say no rational being would fully endorse all the doctrines of the gospel, and especially that particular form of them which John

Calvin taught, for if there are any doctrines that excite more the spleen of these wise men than any other, it is the doctrines of grace—the doctrine of discriminating, distinguishing Love, the doctrine of divine sovereignty, the doctrine of God’s being really God, and not man. Against these, they have no words too bitter! “Oh,” they say, “it is an exploded theory. It has had its day, and it has become powerless.” And so, without actually persecuting those who hold the truth of God, or without even setting themselves up by active efforts to put it down—they do secretly, with a sneer and with a jest, pass it by as a thing utterly unworthy of a rational person, a thing that is not for a moment to be thought of as being one-half as important as the wing of a beetle, or as the particular flight of a sparrow, or the period of the migration of a swallow! All the facts of natural history they think valuable and important, but these grander truths of God which have to do with the kingdom of God, they utterly despise and think they are but the dream of simpletons! Again, I say, my brothers and sisters, marvel not at this. Let this be to you another argument that the Spirit of God knew what was in man, and rightly judged of the human heart when He said, “The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God.”

Probably in this assembly there are very few of either of these two classes, but a far more numerous company now claims our attention. The great mass of mankind says, “We dare say it is all well, and good, and true, and it is a proper thing for ministers to think about, and the deacons of churches and so on; no doubt they should see to it—it is very proper that there should be a right creed, and that the articles of the Church should be defended. And of course, the Bible Society should spread the Bible. But then, of course, nobody ought to be demanded to read it—it is of no particular importance.” Better read the almanac than read the Bible, according to some; and as to the doctrines, “Oh,” they say—

“For forms of faith let graceless zealots fight,
He can't be wrong whose life is in the light.”

“O yes, no doubt,” they say, when they see some zealous brother vindicating a truth of God, “you are all right and so is your friend who believes the very opposite; you are both right as far as you go; and as far as I am concerned, I would never interfere with you, for I do not consider the things to be worth the turning of a hair! I never trouble my head at all about it. I have so much to do with the rise and fall of stocks in the market, of attending to my cattle, or seeing after my shop, that it would not do for me to attempt to be a theologian. The Bible is an excellent book; I have nothing to say against that, certainly; but, at the same time, for a farmer, a book on practical chemistry is more useful, and no doubt, for a person who holds some office in the parish, he had better buy a handy book of common law than a book on the law of God.” I only just give you a sketch of what many say, and of what many more think. I know there are many of you here present today who say, “O yes, it is a good thing for us to go somewhere on Sunday; we do not think the Sabbath should be broken; we like to hear a minister, and we like to see him in earnest—but it is of no importance to us—it is not a matter of concern to us.” Ah, Sirs, you, too, have proven that, “The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, because they are spiritually discerned.” These things which are so important, that you should neglect everything else to attend to them, are by you thought folly! These eternal realities, compared with which the world's highest interests are but as unsubstantial shadows, you pass by as being idle dreams, and doubtless, they *are* dreams to you—because you, still being in your natural

estate—do not, cannot, *will not* receive the things of the Spirit of God!

We are not without those persons, also, who even go farther. They say, “Well these things are of no importance to *me*”; and they think that those are fools who feel that there is any importance in them to them *personally*. “Oh,” says one, “for a man to sit down and think on the doctrine of Election, and believe he is elect, why the man must be of a very debased intellect!” “Oh,” says another, “to be always meditating upon the atonement of Christ—why there are other themes more expansive to think than this.” “Yes,” says a third, “to be turning over a mere system of divinity, and professing to be able to revel in certain mysterious truths—such persons must be of a weak mind, or else very fanatical or enthusiastic!” And so you will often hear persons say, if a man is a little more earnest than usual, “Surely that man is going wild! Certainly he is attaching an undue importance to these matters.” They will put him down as a Sectarian, perhaps, which is one of the most honorable names by which a true Christian is known in these times. “Ah,” they will say, “a zealot, a bigot!” because a man happens to be honest in what he professes to believe, and thinks that if religion is anything, it would be *everything*, and if it is worth any of our thoughts, it is worth *all* our thoughts; that if it has any truth in it, it ought to be the master and ruler of all other truths, and governor of all the thoughts and the acts of life! Now, Christian men and women, when you see any who turn upon their heels and despise you, because with earnestness you would seek the Lord your God, and strive to honor Him, think it not some new display of human depravity; think not that you have made a fresh discovery in the awful deep of human departure from God! But say, “I know and once more am I confirmed in the fact that the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God!” It is a great wonder that there is

one Christian upon the face of the earth! Some religions teach doctrines palatable to human nature, but the doctrines of Christ are the most unpalatable that could have been suggested! Some religions find that nature echoes their voice, but Christ comes and brings a sword upon the earth to slay the fondest darlings of our fancy, and put to death the most proud favorites of our ambition! Oh, had the religion of Christ taught us that man was a noble being, only a *little* fallen— had the religion of Christ taught that Christ had taken away by His blood, sin from every man, and that every man by his own free will, without divine grace, might be saved—it were indeed a most acceptable religion to the mass of men! It would just suit their taste; and as the ox drinks down water, so would they drink it down. But such a religion as that of Christ, so diametrically opposed as it is to all the evil propensities of man, owes its very existence to the might of God; that it has not long ago died from the earth through the death of its last admirer, is only due to that supreme power of the Holy Spirit which goes with the preaching of the gospel wherever Christ is faithfully lifted up!

II. Now, briefly on my second point—**THE NATURAL MAN COUNTS THE THINGS OF GOD TO BE FOOLISH**; but there is nothing whatever in the things themselves to justify such an estimation.

Sir, you do not know what you say when you declare that the gospel of Christ is absurd! I am certain you do not understand it and that you are talking of something you have never studied. You are generally pretty safe with a man who rails at the Bible, by asking, “Have you ever read it?” You are not often wrong, when you hear a minister of Christ found fault with, by asking the man, “Did you ever hear him? Did you ever read his sermons?” In nine cases out of ten, it is, “No, I do not know anything about him, yet I do not like him. I do not know anything about Christ, but I do not like Him. I do not know

anything about His doctrines, and I do not wish to know.” I have heard persons rail at Calvinistic doctrine, who never in their lives have read a word that Calvin wrote! If you were to offer them a small treatise in which that noble system of divinity should be vindicated, they would say, “Oh, it is no doubt so dry, I would not be able to read it.” Yet these learned gentlemen know what is inside a book without opening it! They are like some critics of whom I have heard who, when they meet with a new volume, take the knife and cut the first page, smell it and then condemn or praise the whole book! Many there are who do just the same with the Bible; they have heard some verses of it once or twice, they have got some idea of it, and straightway they are wise! They take to themselves their own degree of Doctor of Divinity, and they have much boldness in their unbelief.

Now, of any man who should denounce the system of truth which is taught in Scripture as ridiculous and foolish, I can only say he has never taken the trouble to search it out for himself. Have not the mightiest intellects confessed that the truths of this Book were infinitely above their highest flights? Even Newton, who could thread the spheres, and map the march of what else, had seemed discordant planets—even *he* said there were depths here which no mortal could fathom; “O the depths of the wisdom of God!” This has been the exclamation of some of the most glorious minds that have ever enlightened the world! And I can say, and I know it to be true, that every man who reads the Word of God, and studies the divinity therein revealed—if he at first thinks that he understands it, when he reads again, he finds that he has only begun to know! And when he shall have searched year after year, and have become more than usually foresightful in the study of the things of God, he will still say, “Now I begin to know my folly; now I began to discover that God is above me,

and beneath me, but I cannot grasp Him, I cannot find out the Almighty to perfection! His Words, His works, His ways herein revealed to the sons of men are past finding out.” You wise fellows, who turn upon your heels and sneer at things which have astonished minds infinitely more vast than yours, prove your own folly when you call the things of God folly! With regard to that particular form of divine truth which we hold so dear, currently called Calvinistic doctrines—there is no philosophy propounded by any sage as profound as that philosophy! There are no truths of God that were ever taught so wonderful, so worthy of the most profound research of the most expanded minds as those doctrines of the eternal Love, the discriminating grace, and the infinite power of God, co-working to produce the results which His wisdom has decreed. When every other science shall have been exhausted; when astronomy shall have no wonders left; when geology shall have no secrets to unravel; when natural history and philosophy shall have given up all their infinite treasures, there will still remain a mine without a bottom, there will still remain a sea of wisdom without a shore, in the doctrines of the gospel of the grace of God! The folly, therefore, cannot be in the doctrines themselves.

And as on the one hand, these things of the Spirit of God are wise and profound, so on the other hand, they are most important, and most imperatively necessary to be understood, so that if they are not received, it is not because they are uncongenial with our necessities. There are some speculations which a man need not enter upon. I receive constantly questions upon speculations which never struck my mind before, and certainly never will again. Persons want to know what the origin of sin is; they ask ten thousand questions which, if they could be answered, would not make them a whit the better! But the things of the gospel of God, which are as

important as life and death depending upon them, men are content to slur over without making any earnest inquiry, or setting themselves to ascertain their truth! O sirs, the doctrines of God teach you your relationship to your Maker; is not that worth understanding? They teach you your condition before the Most High God; should you not know that? Ought you not to have clear ideas of it? They show you how God can be just to man, and yet be gracious; is not that a riddle that is worthy to have an answer? They reveal to you how you can approach God, and become His child; how you may be conformed to His image, and made a partaker of His glory—is not *that* worth understanding? They reveal to you the world to come; they put to your short-sighted eyes a telescope which enables you to pierce the darkness, and to see the unseen. The doctrines of grace put into your hands the keys of heaven, and unveil the secrets of death and hell—are not these things worth grasping? Are not the secrets of these places worth knowing? The doctrines of grace put inside your hands powers infinitely greater than any wizard was conceived to have wielded when he used his magic rod. By their might, you can destroy your troubles; you can see your sins swallowed up; you can behold your enemies defeated; you can see death destroyed, the grave swallowed up, and life and immortality brought to light! If you, then, as a natural man, say that the things that are written in this book are foolish, it is not because they are trivial, unimportant and despicable—for no man can ever overestimate their value and no soul can solemnly enough weigh them, and understand how important they are! It argues a high excess of impiety when a man shall say that that which came from God is foolish. Perhaps blasphemy itself cannot outlive that, and yet how many have been guilty of this constructive blasphemy!

Let my finger run around these galleries, and along these seats beneath; are there not many of you who have said the Bible was a dull and uninteresting book? And yet God wrote it! And what have you said? Have you not impugned your Maker? Have you not said, perhaps, that the doctrines of the gospel were very unimportant? Can you believe that your Maker sat down to write an unimportant book, or that the Holy Spirit inspired men of old to write that which, if not nonsense, is certainly of no importance whatever? Come, bow your head and repent of this grave sin—for a sin it is—since it is not within the compass of any modest reason to imagine that any word which God has written can be foolish, or unimportant, or unworthy to be understood! I suppose it is granted by all who love the Word of God, and to those mainly I must appeal, that the reason why the natural man rejects the doctrines of God is not because they are foolish. Then, there must be some other reason.

III. Thirdly, I propose to speak of THE REASON FOR THE REJECTION OF THE DOCTRINES OF THE GOSPEL BY NATURAL MEN.

The reasons are to be found in *themselves*. And what are those reasons? The apostle tells us they cannot receive them for they are foolishness unto them. I think he means they cannot receive them, first of all, *for lack of taste*. You have sometimes seen a man standing before a splendid picture. It was painted by Raphael, or Rubens, or Titians, and he stands and admires it. “What a noble countenance!” he says, “How well the coloring has been placed! How excellently he understands his lights and shadows! What a fine conception! I could stand a week and admire that splendid picture.” Some country bumpkin who is walking through the gallery, hears what our friend, the artist, is saying, and he says, “I would not like to stand a week and look at it; it looks to me to be an old

decayed piece of canvas that needs cleaning. I do not think the world would be much the worse if it should all get cleaned off.” He walks through the gallery, and notices that on the wall outside there is a great daub—a picture of an elephant standing on its head, and a clown or two performing in some circus, and he says, “*That’s* beautiful; that’s just my taste.” Now you blame our country friend because he cannot admire that which is really excellent, but finds a great deal more satisfaction in a common daub plastered on the wall. It would be quite correct to say of him, that he cannot receive the beauties of refinement and taste, because he has never been in any way instructed in the matter; he has a lack of taste for such things. Just so is it with the natural man! Give him some work of fiction—a daub upon the wall. Give him some fine piece of imagination, (and what is that when compared with the word of Him who spoke from heaven?), and he is satisfied. But before the book of God, before the revelation of the Most High, of the All-Wise, he stands and he sees *nothing!* He sees nothing to admire; nothing to enchant his heart; nothing to kindle his imagination; nothing to enlist his faith; nothing to arouse his powers; nothing to excite his hopes. Surely there is a sad lack of taste here, and the natural man, for lack of taste for such things, loves not the things of God.

But it is not merely for lack of taste, it is for *lack of organs* by which to appreciate the thing. Here is a blind man, and we have taken him upon a pilgrimage to the summit of a mountain. What a landscape, my friend! What a landscape! What do you think of it? “Not much,” he says. Why, look at those lakes there melting into one! Do you not see the mountain yonder across the valley? What a variety of colors upon its sides! Did you ever see such a blending of colors as that which is here produced by the Great Artist? And *there*, cannot you see yonder clouds, how nobly they sail along? Look downward! What a pleasant sight

is that village which seems to have diminished till it looks like a few children's toys put together there in sport. And now turn yonder and see that winding river like a thread of silver going through the emerald fields—what a magnificent view! What do you think of it, my friend? “I do not think much of it,” he says. You are astonished. At last you say, “Well, if you do not think something of *this*, you must be blind.” “That is just what I am,” he says, “and of course, I cannot think much of this when I am blind.” Now the natural man is blind. The eyes of the Christian are his faith. But the natural man, being destitute of a living faith in our living Savior, is like a man without eyes! He says it is foolish; it is nothing to him. Do you think you could get a blind man to pay hundreds of pounds for a single picture? It is of no use to him. What would a deaf man give to go where you hear the sweetest singing that ever trilled from human lips? “Oh, no,” he thinks, “it is foolish!” He can hardly understand why men should spend their money, and give the time to listen to the numerous combinations of sound produced by a Handel. Or if blind, he cannot comprehend why men should build long galleries, and hang their fortunes out in pictures, or why they should travel to the Alps, or wish to cross the sea to view the mighty wonders of other lands. “No,” he says, “it is foolish and trivial—better to stay at home. There is nothing in it.” So is it with the natural man. He lacks the organs; he has no ears of faith, no eyes of faith, and he cannot, therefore, receive the things of God. They are foolishness to him.

But more than this—not only does he lack taste and lack organs, *but he actually lacks the nature which could appreciate these things*. I will tell you a fable. There was a certain swine exceedingly learned among its class. It had studied the flavor of all manners of seeds, and fruits, and acorns, and knew right well, by long calculations and experience, the right time when the trough would be full, and when it would be time for it to come

forth from its resting place. Greatly respected was this aged swine, and considered by its fellows to be one of the great dignitaries of the sty. And one day, it enlightened its fellows by a speech to this effect—"I saw," he said, "the other night, by the light of the moon, a man—poor simple man he was, looking through a long tube at the stars. Now, I thought within myself that surely he was mad. If he had been scraping up acorns, there would have been some common sense in it; if he had been getting together husks, why there would have been something practical in it; but for a man with two feet and two hands, to be letting them be still, and only using his eyes to look up at the stars—ah, he must be a fanatic and an enthusiast! He is not as sensible and practical as you and I are, who are content as long as we get our barley meal regularly, and can creep back and lie down again in our straw." And all his audience grunted their approval. They said at once that this human being was far inferior to the swine in the matter of practical wisdom! Do not smile; perhaps you belong to these gentry yourselves. I heard a human swine say the other day—mark, a *human swine*—it was one who sometimes could look through a telescope, and this human swine said, "Ah, there you are! You are going to your chapel on Thursday night and to your prayer meeting on Monday, and you spend hours in praying and reading your Bible; it is fanaticism! Now, I am the man for common sense; I stick to my business, I do! I say, 'Leave these things to take care of themselves'; I am looking out for the present; I am practical, I am." And those who were by, grunted their approval, like human swine, as they were, and if a really spiritual man had been present, he would not have wondered, but he would have said, "Every being to its taste; these are natural men, and they set up their own nature; it is a swinish nature, and they act up to their swinish spirit." He would not have been angry with them, but he would have pitied them! Poor things, "The natural

man receives not the things of the Spirit of God.” “What a degrading simile!” says one. It is, sir, but not more degrading than human nature is. “Why you make us out to be inferior to Christians, then!” Of course, you are! As much as the brute is inferior to a man, so is a mere *natural man* inferior to a *spiritually-minded man*, because we rise by three steps of the ladder. There is the animal, he lacks intellect. God gives intellect, and then comes the man. God gives His Spirit, and then comes the Christian; but the Christian is a higher and nobler creature than the mere offspring of Adam! Just as much as the Second Adam, who is the Lord from heaven, exceeds the first Adam, who was but made of the dust of the earth, so do the seed of the Second Adam exceed all the offspring of the first Adam— rising to a higher life, to greater dignities, and to a nobler destiny than they!

IV. And now, lastly, I come to THE PRACTICAL TRUTHS WHICH FLOW FROM THIS GREAT, THOUGH SORROWFUL, FACT.

Do you not perceive, brothers and sisters that if what I have stated is true, there is *absolute necessity for regeneration, or the work of the Spirit?* An absolute necessity, I say, because in no one single instance can it be dispensed with. You may educate a nature till it should attain the highest point, but you cannot educate an old nature into a new one! You may educate a horse, but you cannot educate it into a man! You shall train the bird that sits upon your finger, but you cannot train a sparrow into an eagle— nor is it possible for you to train, by the best instruction, the natural man into a spiritual man! Between the two there is still a great gulf fixed. But cannot the natural man, by great efforts at last, come to be spiritual? No, he cannot! Let the fish in the water wish as much as ever it likes, and despite Dr. Darwin's hypothesis, I declare that no pike by all its wishing ever wished itself into an ostrich, and that no single minnow was ever known to make itself into a lark! It may get as high as

its own nature can get it, but not beyond; it is a transformation which only the Divine Being can make. So you may by your own efforts make yourselves the best of *natural men*. You may become the most patriotic of statesmen, you may become the most sober and discreet of moralists, you may become the kindest and most benevolent of philanthropists, but into a *spiritual man* you cannot bring yourself. Do what you will, and still, at your very best, there is a division as wide as eternity between you and the regenerate man. But cannot another man help us out of such a nature into a state of grace? No, by no means! As man is powerless for himself, so is he powerless for his fellow. The priest may dip his pretentious fingers into the water which he professes to have sanctified, and may put the drops upon the infant's brow, but that the child is regenerate is a lie! He may take the child in late life into the baptismal pool if he will, and there bury him agreeably to the apostle's metaphor, but that by immersion, any more than by sprinkling, a soul can be regenerate is a gross and infamous lie! He may put his hand upon his head, and bless him in God's name; he may perform many enchantments over him, and conclude at last with the final sacred greasing, and dispatch his spirit with extreme unction into another world—but to regenerate another man is as impossible to our fellow men as to create a world or to make another heaven, and rival the majesty of Deity!

How, then, is it to be done? The Spirit of God alone can do it! O sirs, this is a great mystery, but you must know it if you would be saved! It is a solemn secret, but it is one which must be known in your consciences, or else shut out from heaven you will be! The Spirit of God must make you new—you must be born-again! "If a man is in Christ Jesus he is a new creature, old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new." The same power which raised Christ Jesus from the dead must be exerted in raising us from the dead! The very same

omnipotence, without which angels or worms could not have had a being, must again step forth out of its privy-chamber, and do as great a work as it did at the first creation in making us anew in Christ Jesus our Lord! There have been attempts at all times to get rid of this unpleasant necessity. Constantly the Christian Church itself tries to forget it, but as often as ever this old doctrine of regeneration is brought forward pointedly, God is pleased to favor His Church with a revival. The doctrine which looks at first as though it would hush every exertion with indolence, and make men sit down with listlessness and despair, is really like the trumpet of God to awake the dead! And where it is fully and faithfully preached, though it grates upon the carnal ear, though it excites enmity in many against the man who dares to proclaim it, yet it is acknowledged of God. Because it honors God, God will honor it! This was the staple preaching of Whitefield, and it was by the preaching of this that he was made as the mighty angel flying through the midst of heaven preaching the everlasting gospel to every creature! He was always great upon that which he called the great R—Regeneration. Whenever you heard him, the three Rs came out clearly—Ruin, Regeneration, and Redemption! Man *ruined*, wholly ruined, hopelessly, helplessly, eternally ruined! Man *regenerated* by the Spirit of God, and by the Spirit of God alone wholly made a new creature in Christ! Man *redeemed*, redeemed by precious blood from all his sins, not by works of righteousness, not by deeds of the law, not by ceremonies, prayers, or resolutions, but by the precious blood of Christ! Oh, we must be very pointed, and very plain about regeneration, for this is the very pith and marrow of the matter—“Except a man is born-again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Another practical inference; if you and I, or any of us, have received the things of the Spirit of God, we ought to look upon that as comfortable evidence that we have been born-again.

What do you say, my hearer? Does your faith lay her hand this morning upon the head of Christ, and take Him to be your Savior, your teacher, and your all? If so, blessed are you, for flesh and blood have not revealed this unto you! Or does your spirit this morning not only agree to the truth of divine election, of assured redemption, and of the finished work and immutable love of Christ; but do you love the truth in your heart as well as agree to it in the head? If so, the natural man receives not these things, therefore, you are no natural man; the Spirit of God has brought you into His kingdom, because He has enabled you to receive His truth! Precious is faith indeed, because it assuredly evidences to us what is beyond the reach of our senses. You can't tell whether you are born-again or not except by your faith. There will be no difference in your face, there will be no difference in your flesh, nor even in your mental characteristics; you may remain to a great extent the same man as far as mind and body are concerned; but *faith*—that which was not there before—*faith* is the grand symptom which betokens returning health! It is the flag hung out upon the castle of the soul, showing that the King is the secret tenant in the stateroom of the soul! It is the light which shows that the sun has risen! It is the morning star which heralds the full illumination and meridian sunlight of eternal glory! Prize your faith; ask for more of it, and look upon it as being evidence that you have passed from death unto life!

And, lastly, my dear hearers, how this text shows you the necessity of accompanying all your efforts to do good with earnest prayer to God! “Old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon.” When we first begin to preach, we think that the doctrines that are so sweet to us will be sure to be sweet to other people; and when persons begin to abuse and find fault, we are astonished. Oh, if we had begun to learn the truth a little better, we would not be astonished at all, except when anyone

receives the truth of God, for *that* we should always think to be the greatest miracle of all! You have been trying to teach your child, and it is still not converted. Ah, don't marvel, but take your child in the arms of your prayer to the Spirit of God, and say, "O Lord, I cannot put the truth into this child, for it cannot receive it; if You renew its heart, then it shall receive the truth indeed!" And especially, may I ask your continued and earnest prayers for me. What is the minister of Christ to do? He has to speak to a mountain, and bid it be removed. Can his words remove it? He has to speak to fire, and bid it change its nature into water. He has to speak to the dead, and say, "You dry bones, live!" Is not his ministry a foolish and a futile thing unless the Spirit of God is with him? I pray you then, be instant in your prayers to God. Strive earnestly at the throne of grace for all the ministers of the New Testament—that power may be bestowed upon them—for we are better at home than here, if the Spirit of God is not with us! In vain, O you unbelievers, you sound your trumpets! In vain, O you Gideons, you break your pitchers that the light may shine! In vain, you Jonahs, you cry through the midst of the wretched city! In vain, you Peters, you preach even to peoples of many nations! If the Spirit come not down from on high like tongues of fire; if God sends not life, and energy, and light with the Word—you shall go back without your sheaves—you shall return without success, wearied by disappointment, damaged by fear, and ready to lay down and die! But oh, if you come forth, O Spirit of God, there is not a preacher in the corner of the streets who shall not win his souls! There is not a minister today in the humblest assembly, in the lowest of back streets, who shall not be made like Peter on the day of Pentecost! There is not one feeble man or woman teaching children in the Sunday school who shall not become a winner of souls when the Spirit of God is with them!

Of all that I have taught this morning, this is the sum—Man is *dead* in sin, and spiritual life is a *gift* of God. You who have received it, should plead with God that that gift should be bestowed on others. “He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; he who believes not shall be damned.”

408 ACCIDENTS, NOT PUNISHMENTS – LUKE 13:1-5

**A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Morning, September 8th, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“There were present at that season some that told Him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose you that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no: but, unless you repent, you shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, think you that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem! I tell you, no: but, unless you repent, you shall all likewise perish.”
— Luke 13:1-5**

THE YEAR 1861 will have notoriety among its fellows as the year of calamities. Just at that season when man goes forth to reap the fruit of his labors, when the harvest of the earth is ripe, and the barns are beginning to burst with the new wheat, Death, the mighty reaper, has come forth to cut down his harvest. Full sheaves have been gathered into his garner—the tomb, and terrible have been the wailings which compose the harvest hymn of death! In reading the newspapers during the last two weeks, even the most stolid must have been the subject of very painful feelings. Not only have there been catastrophes so alarming that the blood chills at their remembrance, but, column after column of the paper has been devoted to

calamities of a minor degree of horror, but which, when added together, are enough to astound the mind with the fearful amount of sudden death which has of late fallen on the sons of men! We have had not only one incident for every day in the week, but two or three; we have not simply been stunned with the alarming noise of one terrific crash, but many have followed upon each other's heels, like Job's messengers, till we have needed Job's patience and resignation to hear the dreadful tale of woes!

Now, brothers and sisters, such things as these have always happened in all ages of the world. Think not that this is a new thing; do not dream, as some do, that this is the produce of an overworked civilization, or of that modern and most wonderful discovery of steam. If the steam engine had never been known, and if the railway had never been constructed, there would have been sudden deaths and terrible accidents, not withstanding. In taking up the old records in which our ancestors wrote down their accidents and calamities, we find that the old stage coach yielded quite as heavy a booty to death as does the swiftly-rushing train! There were gates to Hades then, as many as there are now, and roads to death quite as steep and precipitous, and traveled by quite as vast a multitude, as in our present time. Do you doubt that? Permit me to refer you to the chapter before you. Remember those 18 upon whom the tower in Siloam fell? What if no collision crushed them? What if they were not destroyed by the ungovernable iron horse, dragging them down from an embankment? Yet, some badly built tower, or some wall beaten by the tempest, could fall upon 18 at a time, and they might perish. Or worse than that, a despotic ruler, having the lives of men at his belt like the keys of his palace, might fall upon worshippers in the Temple itself, and mix their blood with the blood of the bullocks which they were just then sacrificing to the God of heaven! Do not think, then, that this

is an age in which God is dealing more harshly with us than of old. Do not think that God's providence has become more lax than it was; there were always sudden deaths, and there always will be! There were always seasons when death's wolves hunted in hungry packs and, probably, until the end of this dispensation, the last enemy will hold his periodic festivals, and glut the worms with the flesh of men! Be not, therefore, cast down with any sudden fear, neither be troubled by these calamities. Go about your business, and if your avocations should call you to cross the field of death itself, do it, and do it bravely. God has not thrown up the reins of the world, and He has not taken off His hands from the helm of the great ship, still—

“He everywhere has sway,
And all things serve His might;
His every act pure blessing is,
His path unsullied light.”

Only learn to trust Him, and you shall not be afraid of sudden fear; “Your soul shall dwell at ease, and your seed shall inherit the earth.”

The particular subject of this morning, however, is this—the use which we ought to make of these fearful texts which God is writing in capital letters upon the history of the world. God has spoken once, yes, twice; let it not be said that man regards it not. We have seen a glimmering of God's power, we have beheld something of the readiness with which He can destroy our fellow creatures. Let us “hear the rod and Him who has appointed it,” and in hearing it, let us do two things. First, let us not be so foolish as to draw the conclusion of superstitious and ignorant persons—that conclusion which is hinted at in the text, namely, that those who are thus destroyed

by accident are sinners above all the sinners who are in the land. And, secondly, let us draw the right and proper inference; let us make practical use of all these events for our own personal improvement; let us hear the voice of the Savior saying, “Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish.”

I. First, then, LET US TAKE HEED THAT WE DO NOT DRAW THE RASH AND HASTY CONCLUSION FROM TERRIBLE ACCIDENTS, THAT THOSE WHO SUFFER BY THEM SUFFER ON ACCOUNT OF THEIR SINS.

It has been most absurdly stated that those who travel on the first day of the week, and meet with an accident, ought to regard that accident as being a judgment from God upon them, on account of their violating the Christian’s day of worship. It has been stated even by godly ministers, that the late deplorable collision should be looked upon as an exceedingly amazing and remarkable visitation of the Wrath of God against those unhappy persons, who happened to be in the Clayton tunnel. Now, I enter my solemn protest against such an inference as that, not in my own name, but, in the name of Him who is the Christian’s Master, and the Christian’s Teacher! I say of those who were crushed in that tunnel, do you think that they were sinners above all the sinners? “I tell you, no—but, unless you repent, you shall all likewise perish.” Or those who perished but last Monday, do you think that they were sinners above all the sinners that were in London? “I tell you, no—but, unless you repent, you shall all likewise perish.” Now mark, I would not deny but what there have sometimes been judgments of God upon particular persons for sin; sometimes, but I think but exceedingly rarely, such things have occurred. Some of us have heard in our own experience, instances of men who have blasphemed God, and defied Him to destroy them, and have suddenly fallen dead. And, in such cases, the punishment has so quickly followed the blasphemy, that one could not help

perceiving the hand of God in it! The man had wantonly asked for the judgment of God, his prayer was heard, and the judgment came. And, beyond a doubt, there are what may be called natural judgments. You see a man ragged, poor, and homeless; he has been a degenerate, he has been a drunk, he has lost his character, and it is but the just judgment of God upon him that he should be starving, and that he should be an outcast among men. You see in the hospitals loathsome specimens of men and women foully diseased; God forbid that we should deny that in such a case—the punishment being the natural result of the sin—there is a judgment of God upon licentiousness and ungodly lusts! And the same may be said in many instances, where there is so clear a link between the sin and the punishment, that the blindest men may discern that God has made Misery the child of Sin. But, in cases of accident, such as that to which I refer, and in cases of sudden and instant death, again, I say, I enter my earnest protest against the foolish and ridiculous idea that those who thus perish are sinners above all the sinners who survive unharmed!

Let me just try to reason this matter out with Christian people; for there are some unenlightened Christian people who will feel horrified by what I have said! Those who are ready at perversions may even dream that I would apologize for the breach of the day of worship. Now, I do no such thing. I do not extenuate the sin; *I only testify and declare that accidents are not to be viewed as punishments for sin, for punishment belongs not to this world, but to the world to come.* To all those who hastily look on every calamity as a judgment I would speak in the earnest hope of setting them right. Let me begin, then, by saying, my dear brothers and sisters, do you not see that *what you say is not true?* And, that is the best reason why you should not say it! Does not your own experience and observation teach you that one event happens both to the righteous and to the wicked? It is

true, the wicked sometimes fall dead in the street, but, has not the minister fallen dead in the pulpit? It is true that a pleasure boat, in which men were seeking their own pleasure on a Sunday, has suddenly gone down. But, is it not equally true, that a ship which contained none but godly men, who were bound upon an excursion to preach the gospel, has gone down, too? The visible providence of God has no respect of persons! And a storm may gather around the “John Williams” missionary ship, quite as well as around a vessel filled with riotous sinners. Why, do you not perceive that the providence of God has been, in fact, in its outward dealings, rather harder upon the good than upon the bad? For did not Paul say, as he looked upon the miseries of the righteous in his day, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable”? The path of righteousness has often conducted men to the rack, to prison, to the gallows, to the stake—while the road of sin has often led a man to empire, to dominion, and to high esteem among his fellows. It is not true that in *this world* God punishes men for sin, and rewards them for their good deeds. Did not David say, “I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree”? And, did not this perplex the psalmist for a little season until he went into the sanctuary of God, and then he understood their end? Your faith assures you that the ultimate result of providence will work out only good to the people of God. Your life, though it is but a brief part of the divine drama of history, must have taught you that providence does not outwardly discriminate between the righteous and the wicked. The righteous perish as suddenly as the wicked! The plague knows no difference between the sinner and the saint! The sword of war is alike pitiless to the sons of God, and the sons of Belial! When God sends forth the scourge, it slays the innocent as suddenly as the perverse and obstinate! Now, my brothers and sisters, if your idea of an avenging and awarding

providence is not true, why should you talk as if it were? And why, if it is not correct as a *general rule*, should you suppose it to be true in this one particular instance? Get the idea out of your head, for the gospel of God never needs you to believe an untruth!

But, secondly, there is another reason. The idea that whenever an accident occurs, we are to look upon it as a judgment from God, *would make the providence of God to be, instead of a great deep, a very shallow pool*. Why, any child can understand the providence of God, if it is true that when there is a railway accident, it is because people travel on a Sunday. I take any little child from the smallest infant class in the Sunday school, and he will say, "Yes, I see that." But then, if such a thing is providence, if it is a providence that can be understood, manifestly it is not the Scriptural idea of providence, for in the Scripture, we are always taught that God's providence is "a great deep." And even Ezekiel, who had the wings of the cherubim, and could fly aloft, when he saw the wheels which were the great picture of the providence of God, he could only say the wheels were so high that they were terrible, and were full of eyes so that he cried, "O wheel!" If—I repeat it to make it plain—if *always* a calamity were the result of some sin, providence would be as simple as twice two made four; it would be one of the first lessons that a little child might learn. But, Scripture teaches us that providence is a great depth in which the human intellect may swim and dive, but, it can neither find a bottom nor a shore. And, if you and I pretend that we can find out the reasons of providence, and twist the dispensations of God over our fingers, we only prove our folly, but we do not prove that we have begun to understand the ways of God! Why, look, sirs; suppose for a moment there were some great performance going on, and you should step in the middle of it and see one actor upon the stage for a moment, and you should

say, “Yes, I understand it,” what a simpleton you would be! Do you not know that the great transactions of providence began nearly 6,000 years ago? And, you have only stepped into this world for 30 or 40 years, and seen one actor on the stage, and you say you understand it! Tush! You do not; you have only begun to know. Only He knows the end from the beginning! Only He understands what the great results are, and what the great reason is for which the world was made, and for which He permits both good and evil to occur. Think not that you know the ways of God! It is to degrade providence, and to bring God down to the level of men, when you pretend that you can understand these calamities, and find out the secret designs of wisdom!

But next, do you not perceive that such an idea as this would *encourage Phariseeism*? These people who were crushed to death, or scalded, or destroyed under the wheels of railway carriages, were worse sinners than we are? Very well, then what good people we must be; what excellent examples of virtue! We do not such things as they, and therefore, God makes all things smooth for us. Inasmuch as we have travelled, some of us every day in the week, and, yet, have never been smashed to pieces, we may on this supposition, rank ourselves with the favorites of Deity. And then, do you not see, brothers and sisters our safety would be an argument for our being Christians? Our having traveled on a railway safely would be an argument that we were regenerate persons—yet, I have never read in the Scriptures, “We know that we have passed from death unto life because we have traveled from London to Brighton safely twice a day.” I never found a verse which looked like this; and yet, if it were true that the worst of sinners met with accidents, it would follow as a natural converse to that proposition, that those who do *not* meet with accidents must be very good people, and what Pharisaical notions we thus beget and foster! But, I

cannot indulge the folly for a moment. As I look for a moment upon the poor mangled bodies of those who have been so suddenly slain, my eyes find tears, but my heart does not boast, nor my lips accuse—far from me IS the boastful cry, “God, I thank You that I am not as these men are!” No, no, no—it is NOT the spirit of Christ—nor the spirit of Christianity! While we can thank God that we are preserved, yet, we can say, “It is of Your mercy that we are not consumed,” and we must ascribe it to His grace and to His grace alone. But, we cannot suppose that we are any better. It is only because He has had mercy, and been very long-suffering with us, not willing that we should perish, but that we should come to repentance, that He has thus preserved us from going down to the grave, and kept us alive.

And then, will you allow me to remark, that the supposition against which I am earnestly contending, is a *very cruel and unkind one*. For if this were the case, that all persons who thus meet with their death in an extraordinary and terrible manner were greater sinners than the rest, would it not be a crushing blow to bereaved survivors, and is it not ungenerous on our part to indulge the idea, unless we are compelled by unanswerable reasons to accept it as an awful truth of God? Now, I defy you to whisper it in the widow's ear. Go home to her and say, “Your husband was a worse sinner than the rest of men, therefore, he died.” You have not brutality enough for that! A little unconscious infant, which had never sinned, though, doubtless, an inheritor of Adam's fall is found crushed amidst the debris of the accident. Now, think for a moment, what would be the infamous consequence of the supposition, that those who perished were worse than others? You would have to make it out that this unconscious infant was a worse sinner than many in the dens of infamy whose lives are yet spared! Do you not perceive that the thing is radically false, and I might perhaps show you the injustice of it best by reminding you that it may

one day turn upon your own head! Let it be your own case that you should meet with sudden death in such a way—are you willing to be adjudged to damnation on that account? Such an event may happen in the house of God. Let me recall to my own, and to your sorrowful recollection, what occurred when once we met together. I can say with a pure heart, we met for no objective but to serve our God, and the minister had no aim in going to that place but that of gathering many to hear who otherwise would not have listened to his voice. Yet, there were funerals as the result of a holy effort (for holy effort we still avow it to have been, and the later smile of God has proved it so). There were deaths and deaths among God’s people; I was about to say I am glad it was with God’s people rather than with others. A fearful fright took hold upon the congregation and they fled, and do you not see, that if accidents are to be viewed as *judgments*, then it is a fair inference that we were sinning in being there—an insinuation which our consciences repudiates with scorn! However, if that logic were true, it is as true against *us*, as it is against *others*, and inasmuch as you would repel with indignation, the accusation that any were wounded or hurt on account of sin, in being there to worship God—what you repel for yourself, repel for others—and be no party to the accusation which is brought against those who have been destroyed during the last fortnight, that they perished on account of any great sin!

Here I anticipate the outcries of prudent and zealous persons who tremble for the Ark of God, and would touch it with Uzzah’s hand. “Well,” says one, “but we ought not to talk like this, for it is a very serviceable superstition, because there are many people who will be kept from traveling on a Sunday by the accident. We ought to tell them, therefore, that those who perished, perished because they traveled on Sunday.” Brothers and sisters, *I would not tell a lie to save a soul*, and this

would be telling lies! I would do anything to stop Sunday labor and sin, but I would not forge a falsehood even to do that. They might have perished on a Monday as well as on a Sunday. God gives no special immunity any day of the week, and accidents may occur as well at one time, as at another. It is only a pious fraud when we seek thus to play upon the superstition of men to make capital for Christ! The Roman Catholic priest might consistently use such an argument, but an honest Christian, who believes that the religion of Christ can take care of itself without his telling lies, scorns to do it. These men did not perish because they traveled on a Sunday! Witness the fact that others perished on the Monday when they were on an errand of mercy. I know not why God sent the accident; God forbid that we should offer our own reason when God has not given us His reason! But, we are not allowed to make the superstition of men an instrument for the advancing the glory of God. You know among Protestants there is a great deal of popery. I meet with people who uphold infant baptism on the plea, "Well, it is not doing any hurt, and there is a great deal of good meaning in it, and, it may do good, and even confirmation may be blessed to some people, and therefore, do not let us speak against it." I have nothing to do with whether the thing does hurt or not! All I have to do with is whether it is *right*, whether it is *Scriptural*, whether it is *true*. And, if the truth does mischief, which is a supposition we can by no means allow, that mischief will not lie at our door! We have nothing to do, but to speak the truth, even though the heavens should fall! I say again, that any advancement of the gospel, which is owing to the superstition of men, is a false advance, and it will, by and by, recoil upon the people who use such an unhallowed weapon. We have a religion which appeals to man's judgment and common sense, and when we cannot get on with that, I scorn that we should proceed by any other means! And, brothers and sisters, if there

is any person who should harden his heart and say, “Well, I am as safe on one day as another,” which is quite true, I must say to him, “The sin of your making such a use as this of a truth must lie at your own door, not at mine; but if I could keep you from violating the Christian’s day of rest, by putting before you a superstitious hypothesis, I would *not do it*, because I feel that though I might keep you from that one sin a little while, you would, by-and-by, grow too intelligent to be duped by me, and then, you would come to look upon me as a priest who had played upon your fears instead of appealing to your judgment.” Oh, it is time for us to know that our Christianity is not a weak, shivering thing that appeals to the petty superstitious fears of ignorant and darkened minds! It is a manly thing, loving the light of God, and needing no sanctified frauds for its defense! Yes, critics, turn your lantern upon us, and let it glare into our very eyes! *We* are not afraid, the truth of God is mighty, and it can prevail, and, if it cannot prevail in the daylight, we have no wish that the sun should set to give it an opportunity. I believe that very much infidelity has sprung from the very natural desire of some Christian people to make use of common mistakes. “Oh,” they have said, “this popular error is a very good one, it keeps people right. Let us perpetuate the mistake, for it evidently does good!” And then, when the mistake has been found out, infidels have said, “Oh, you see how these Christian people are found out in their tricks.” Let us have no tricks, brothers and sisters. Let us not talk to men as though they were little children, and could be frightened by tales of ghosts and witches! The fact is that this is not the time of retribution, and it is worse than idle for us to teach that it is so.

And now, lastly—and then I leave this point—do you not perceive that the un-Christian and un-Scriptural supposition that when men suddenly meet with death it is the result of sin, *robs Christianity of one of its noblest arguments for the immortality of the*

soul? Brothers and sisters, we assert daily with Scripture for our warrant that God is just, and inasmuch as He *is* just, He must punish sin, and reward the righteous. Manifestly, *He does not do it in this world*. I think I have plainly shown that in this world one event happens to both; that the righteous man is poor as well as the wicked, and he dies suddenly as well as the most graceless. Very well, then, the inference is natural and clear, that there must be a *next world* in which these things must be righted. If there is a God, He must be just, and if He is just, He must punish sin; and since He does *not* do it in *this world*, there, therefore, must be *another state* in which men shall receive the due reward of their works, and they who have sown to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, while they who have sown to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting! Make this world the reaping place, and you have taken the sting out of sin. “Oh,” says the sinner, “if the sorrows men endure here is all the punishment they will have, we will sin greedily!” Say to them, “No. *This* is not the world of punishment, but the world of probation; it is not the court of justice, but the land of mercy; it is not the prison of terror, but the house of long-suffering.” And you have opened before their eyes the gates of the *future*. You have set the judgment throne before their eyes. You have reminded them of, “Come, you blessed,” and “Depart, you cursed.” You have a more reasonable, not to say a more Scriptural, ground of appeal to their consciences, and to their hearts.

I have thus spoken with the view of putting down, as much as I can, the idea which is too current among the ungodly—that we as Christians hold every calamity to be a judgment. We do not! We do not believe that those 18 upon whom the tower in Siloam fell were sinners above all the sinners that were in Jerusalem!

II. Now, to our second point. **WHAT USE, THEN, OUGHT WE TO MAKE OF THIS VOICE OF GOD AS HEARD AMIDST THE SHRIEKS AND GROANS OF DYING MEN?** Two uses; first, *inquiry*, and secondly, *warning*.

The first *inquiry* we should ask ourselves is this—“Why may it not be my case that I may very soon and suddenly be cut off? Have I a lease of my life? Have I any special guardianship which ensures me that I shall not suddenly pass the portals of the tomb? Have I received a charter of longevity? Have I been covered with such a coat of armor that I am invulnerable to the arrows of death? Why am I not to die?” And, the next question it should suggest is this—“Am not I as great a sinner as those who died? Are there not with me, even with *me*, sins against the Lord my God? If in outward sin others have exceeded me, are not the thoughts of my heart evil? Does not the same law which curses them curse me? I have not continued in all the things that are written in the book of the law to do them. It is as impossible that I should be saved by my works, as that they should be. Am not I under the law as well as they by nature, and therefore, am not I as well as they under the curse?” Instead of thinking of their sins which would make me proud, I should think of my own which will make me humble! Instead of speculating upon *their* guilt—which is no business of mine—I should turn my eyes within, and think upon *my own* transgression, for which I must personally answer before the Most High God! Then the next question is, “Have I repented of my sin? I need not be inquiring whether *they* have or not—have *I*? Since I am liable to the same calamity, am I prepared to meet it? Have I felt, through the Holy Spirit’s convincing power, the blackness and depravity of my heart? Have I been led to confess before God that I deserve His wrath, and that His displeasure, if it lights on me, will be my just due? Do I hate sin? Have I learned to abhor it? Have I, through the Holy Spirit,

turned away from it as from a deadly poison, and do I seek now to honor Christ my Master? Am I washed in His blood? Do I bear His likeness? Do I reflect His character? Do I seek to live to His praise?" If not, I am in as great a danger as they were, and may quite as suddenly be cut off, and then where am *I*? I will not ask, "Where are *they*?" And then, again, instead of prying into the future destiny of these unhappy men and women, how much better to inquire into our own destiny and our own state!—

“What am I? My soul, awake,
And an impartial survey take.”

Am I prepared to die? If now the gates of hell should be opened, shall I enter there? If now beneath me the wide jaws of death should gape, am I prepared with confidence to walk through the midst of them, fearing no evil, because God is with me? *This is the proper use to make of these accidents.* This is the wisest way to apply the judgments of God to our own selves, and to our own condition. O sirs, God has spoken to every man and woman in London during these last two weeks. He has spoken to me. He has spoken to you. Men, women and children! God's voice has rung out of the dark tunnel—has spoken from the sunset, and from the glaring bonfire round which lay the corpses of men and women. And, He has said to you, “Be you also ready, for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man comes.” It is so spoken to you that I hope it may set you inquiring, “Am I prepared? Am I ready? Am I willing now to face my Judge, and hear the sentence pronounced upon my soul?”

When we have used it thus for inquiry, let me remind you that we ought to use it also for *warning*. “You shall all likewise perish.” “No,” says one, “not *likewise*. We shall not all be

crushed; many of us will die in our beds. We shall not all be burned; many of us will tranquilly close our eyes.” Yes, but the text says, “You shall all likewise *perish*.” And, let me remind you, that some of you may perish in the same identical manner! You have no reason to believe that you may not also *suddenly* be cut off while walking the streets. You may fall dead while eating your meals—how many have perished with the staff of life in their hands! You shall be in your bed, and your bed shall suddenly be made your tomb. You shall be strong, hale, hearty, and in health—and either by an accident or by the stoppage of the circulation of your blood, you shall be suddenly hurried before your God! Oh, may sudden death to you be sudden glory!

But, it may happen with some of us that in the same sudden manner as others have died, so shall we. But, lately, in America, a brother while preaching the Word, laid down his body and his charge at once. You remember the death of Dr. Beaumont, who, while proclaiming the gospel of Christ, closed his eyes to earth? And, I remember the death of a minister in this country, who had but just given out the verse—

“Father, I long, I faint to see
The place of Your abode;
I’d leave Your earthly courts and flee
Up to Your house, my God,”

when it pleased God to grant him the desire of his heart, and he appeared before the King in His beauty! Why, then, may not such a sudden death as that happen to you and to me?

But, it is quite certain that, let death come when it may, there are some few respects in which it will come to us in just the same manner as it has to those who have so lately been hurried away. First, it will come quite as *surely*. They could not,

travel as fast as they would, escape from the pursuer! They could not, journey where they may, *from* home or *to* home, escape the shaft when the time had come! And so shall we perish. Just as surely, as certainly, as death has set his seal upon the corpses which are not covered with the sod, so certainly shall he set his seal on us (unless the Lord should come before), for “It is appointed unto all men once to die, and after death the judgment.” There is no discharge in this way; there is no escape for any individual; there is no bridge over this river; there is no ferry by which we may cross this Jordan dry shod. Into your chill depths, O river, each one of us must descend; in your cold stream our blood must be frozen, and beneath your foaming billows our head must sink! We, too, must surely die. “Trite,” you say, “and commonplace;” and death is commonplace, but it only happens to us once! God grant that that dying once may perpetually be in our minds till we die daily, and find it not hard work to die at the last!

Well then, as death surely comes both to them, and to us, so will it come both to them, and to us most *potently* and *irresistibly*. When death surprised them, then what help had they? A child's card house was not more easily crushed than these ponderous carriages! What could they do to help one another? They are sitting talking side by side. The scream is heard, and before a second cry can be uttered, they are crushed and mangled. The husband may seek to extricate his wife, but heavy timbers have covered her body; he can only see at last her poor head, and she is dead. He takes his sorrowful seat by her side, and puts his hand upon her brow until it is stone cold, and though he has seen one and another, plucked with broken bones from the midst of the ruined mass, he has to leave her body there. Alas, his children are motherless, and himself robbed of the partner of his bosom! They could not resist; they might do what they would, but as soon as the moment came,

on they went—and death or broken bones was the result. So with you and me; bribe the physician with the largest fee, but he could not put fresh blood into your veins; pay him in masses of gold, but he could not make the pulse give another throb. Death, irresistible conqueror of men, there is none who can stand against you; your word is law, your will is destiny! So shall it come to us as it did to them; it shall come with power, and none of us can resist.

When it came to them, it came *instantly*, and would not delay. So will it come to us. We may have longer notice than they, but when the hour has struck, there shall be no postponing it. Gather up your feet in your bed, O Patriarch, for you must die and not live! Give the last kiss to your wife, you veteran soldier of the cross; put your hands upon your children's heads, and give them the dying benediction, for all your prayers cannot lengthen out your life, and all your tears cannot add a drop to the dry well-spring of your being. You must go, the Master sends for you, and He allows no delay. No, though your whole family should be ready to sacrifice their lives to buy you but an hour of respite, it must not be. Though a nation should be a holocaust, a willing sacrifice, to give its sovereign another week in addition to his reign, yet, it must not be. Though the whole flock should willingly consent to tread the dark vaults of the tomb to let their pastor's life be spared but for another year, it must not be. Death will have no delay! The time is up, the clock has struck, the sand has run out, and as certainly as they died when their time was come, in the field by sudden accident, so certainly must we!

And then, again, let us remember, that death will come to us as it did to them, with *terrors*. Perhaps not with the crash of broken timbers; not with the darkness of the tunnel; not with the smoke, and with the steam; not with the shrieks of women, and the groans of dying men—but, yet, with terrors, for meet

death where we may, if we are not in Christ, and if the Shepherd's rod and staff do not comfort us, to die must be an awful and terrible thing! Yes, in your body, O sinner—with downy pillows beneath your head, and a wife's tender arm to bear you up, and a tender hand to wipe your clammy sweat—you will find it awful work to face the monster and feel his sting, and enter into his dread dominion. It is awful work at any time and at every time—under the best and most propitious circumstances—for a man to die unprepared!

And now, I would send you away with this one thought abiding on your memories. We are dying creatures, not living creatures, and we shall soon be gone. Perhaps, as here I stand, and rudely talk of these mysterious things, soon shall this hand be stretched, and dumb the mouth that lisps the faltering strain. Power supreme, O everlasting King, come when You may! Oh, may You never intrude upon an ill-spent hour, but find me wrapped in high meditation, singing to my great Creator; doing works of mercy to the poor and needy ones, or bearing in my arms the poor and weary of the flock. Or solacing the disconsolate, or blowing the blast of the gospel trumpet in the ears of deaf and perishing souls! Then come when You will, if You are with me in life, I shall not fear to meet You in death! But, oh, let my soul be ready with her wedding garment, with her lamp trimmed, and her light burning, ready to see her Master, and enter into the joy of her Lord! Souls, you know the way of salvation! You have heard it often; hear it yet again! "He who believes on the Lord Jesus has everlasting life." "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; he who believes not shall be damned." "Believe you with your heart, and with your mouth make confession." May the Holy Spirit give the grace to do both, and this done, you may say—

"Come, death, and some celestial band,
To bear my soul away!"

409 FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD – I JOHN 1:3

A Sermon

Delivered on Sunday Morning, September 15th, 1861,

by the

REV. C. H. SPURGEON

At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“That which we have seen and heard we declare unto you,
that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our
fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”
— I John 1:3

FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD was one of the richest privileges of unfallen man. The Lord God walked in the garden, and talked with Adam as a man talks with his friend. So long as he was willing and obedient, Adam ate the fat of the land, and among the rich dainties, and “wines on the lees well refined,” of which his soul was a partaker, we must number first and foremost, unbroken communion with God, his Father and his Friend. Sin, as it banished man from Eden, banished man from God, and from that time *our* face has been turned from the Most High, and *His* face has been turned from us—we have hated God, and God has been angry with us every day. Christ came into the world to restore to us our lost patrimony. It was the great objective of His wondrous Sacrifice to put us into a position which should be equal, and even superior to that which we occupied in Adam before the Fall; and as He has already restored to us many things that we lost, so also among the best—fellowship with God! They who have by His grace believed, and have by the precious blood been washed, have

peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord! They are “no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.” They have access with boldness into this grace wherein we stand. So they who are in the kingdom, and under the dispensation of the Second Adam, have restored to them in all its fullness, that fellowship which was lost to them by the sin and disobedience of their first federal head. John was among the number of those who had enjoyed this privilege with Christ in His flesh. He had been Christ’s chosen companion, elect out of the elect to a choice and peculiar privilege. During the incarnation, he was one of the favored three who had enjoyed the closest intimacy with the Redeemer. He had seen Christ in His transfiguration, had witnessed the raising of the dead maid, had been with the Lord in the garden, and he had lingered with Him even when the thrust was given after death, and the blood and water flowed from His pierced heart. John had the nearest, the dearest, the closest fellowship with Christ in the flesh. As he had laid his head upon Christ’s bosom, so had he laid all his thoughts, and all the emotions of his mind upon the heart’s love and divine affection of his Lord and Master. But Christ was gone; it was no more possible to hear His voice, to see Him with eyes, or to handle Him with hands; yet John had not lost His fellowship, though he knew Him no more after the flesh, yet he knew Him after a nobler sort. Nor was his fellowship less real, less close, less sweet, or less divine than it had been when he had walked and talked with Him, and had been privileged to eat and drink with Him at that last sacred feast. John says, “Truly our fellowship *is*”—not *was*—“*is* with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

And now, my brothers and sisters in the common faith of our Lord Jesus, this morning, I trust that many of us can say, “Our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with His Son Jesus

Christ.” Did the apostle John need to say, “Truly”—as much as though some doubted or denied it? We, too, have sometimes an occasion to make as solemn an affirmation as he has done! There are certain sects who exalt the form of their *church government* into a *sine qua non* of piety, and they say of us that it is impossible that we should have a fellowship with Christ because we follow not after *them*. Because we reject not the ministry which God has appointed, to take up with some newly-devised scheme, by which everyone is to instruct his brother, therefore, we have not the fellowship which is reserved for their sect and party. We have been led, when they have spoken very bitterly, to question ourselves, but after deep searching of heart, in reply to them we can say, “brethren, whether you are right, or we are right in the matter of church discipline or organization, yet, we can assure you that “Truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”” And oftentimes the man who thinks more of the doctrine of Christ than of the person of Christ—and couples therewith the conceit that he himself must be right, and all others wrong—because we may not be able to endorse all the heights of *his* doctrine, or, on the other hand, may not be able to join with him in his legal statements—he says, “O these people! There are many of them, but they can have no fellowship with God, because they do not sound our Shibboleth, they do not join with us in every separate dogma which we teach, and, therefore, the Lord is not with them.” Ah, but we can say to them, “Brethren, we are content to leave these doctrinal disputes to the Great Arbiter of right and wrong. We have formed our opinion of Scripture, we hope, as in the sight of God, and as before the Most High, we can say, we have not shunned declaring the whole counsel of God.” But whether this is so or not, we say to you, “Truly,” yes, “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.” And perhaps the

experimentalist—the man who attaches undue importance to his own particular form of experience—may cry out that this minister has not had the same experience of human depravity as himself; he may utterly condemn us because we do not give prominence to a certain favorite but unhealthy standard of spiritual conviction! Well, we can say to him, “We have preached what we know, we have testified what we have seen, and if we cannot go to all the heights and depths, and lengths and breadths, as yet, we hope to grow; but we can say, even should you doubt our declaration, “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.””

This brings me immediately and directly to the text. You will perceive that there is suggested by the text *a quiet investigation leading to a most solemn affirmation*. “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.” And then, there is, secondly, in the former part of the text, *a most affectionate desire leading to appropriate action*. Our desire is that you may have fellowship with us and, therefore, “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.”

I. First, then, let us in all quietude and stillness of heart, talk this matter over with one another, and see if it is not so that we have had, and do have, real **FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER, AND WITH HIS SON JESUS CHRIST**.

Now, brothers and sisters, we *have* had fellowship with the FATHER. In order to have fellowship with any man, there must be a *concord of heart*. “Can two walk together unless they are agreed?” At the very bottom of fellowship, there must be a likeness; we must have like wishes, like desires; we must have espoused like ends, and our spirits must be welded together in the intention to effect like purposes. Now, I think we can avow, this morning, in the first place, that we do feel a sweet concord with God in *His eternal purposes*. I read the Book of God, and I find that He has ordained Christ to be the Head of His Church,

and that He has chosen unto Himself “a number that no man can number.” I find it revealed in the Word of God that He is a God of distinguishing and discriminating grace; that He “will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom He will have compassion.” I read that He will bring many sons unto glory, “to the praise of the glory of His grace wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved.” Brothers and sisters cannot you and I say, as in the sight of a heart-searching God, we have full accord with God in His purposes? Why, we love them, we delight in them! The decrees of God are satisfactory to us. If it were possible for us to alter the roll in which His divine intentions are written, we would not do it. We feel that whatever He has ordained must be right, and as for His ordination of His people unto eternal life and His loving them above all people that are on the face of the earth—why this is one of the richest joys that we know! The *doctrine of election* is a sweet cordial to the child of God. I can cry, “My Father, You are King. You have chosen the base things of this world, and things that are not, to bring to nothing the things that are. And in this, I have fellowship with You, for I can exclaim, ‘I thank You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seems good in Your sight.’”

Again, we have fellowship with God in the objective for which the purpose was first formed, namely, *His own glory*. Ah, the deeds of the Most High tend to manifest His majesty and glorify His Godhead. O brothers and sisters, do not we sympathize with God in this objective? Give glory unto Him, give glory unto Him, O creatures that His hand has made! The highest aspiration of our spirit, when it is most enlarged, and most inflamed is, that He in all things may be glorified. *He* knows, for He can read the heart, that oftentimes, when we

have ourselves been bowed down, and we have been made as the very dust of the earth, we have said, “This is still my comfort, that He is exalted, that *He* still reigns, and does as He wills among the armies of heaven, and among the people of this lower world.” Do you not desire *His* glory as He desires it? He has purposed to stain the pride of all human boasting, and to make the world know that Jehovah is God, and, “that beside Him there is none else.” Do you not also desire the same? Do you not daily pray, “Let Him be magnified from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof; let all creatures call Him blessed, let all that have breath praise, laud and magnify His name”? In this, then—in His purpose, and in the objective of His purpose, we have “fellowship with the Father.”

And now, have we not fellowship with Him in *the plan by which He effects that purpose*? It pleased Him, that in “the fullness of time, He should send forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law to redeem them who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” He laid one foundation, and one only, and He said concerning it, that “other foundation shall no man lay but that which is laid.” God has chosen “the stone which the builders refused,” that it might be made the “Headstone of the corner.” This is the Lord’s doing, and cannot we say, “It is wondrous in our eyes”? As He is unto God “the chief corner stone, elect, precious,” so “unto you who believe *He* is precious.” Looking at all the plan from the beginning to the end, do you not agree with it? Does it not strike you as being the wisest, the most gracious, and the most glorious scheme that could have ever been devised? And as from its first fountain in predestination, onward to the ocean of glory, you traverse the ever-flowing stream, do you not say of it in all matchless course, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has chosen us in Him from before the foundation of the world,

and who having, chosen us, will glorify us and bring us to Himself at the last”? Yes, there is not a single word that we would alter! There is not a line in this divine scheme that we would wish to change! If it approves itself to Him, it certainly approves itself to us! If He chose it as the plan of divine operation, we adore His choice, we reverence both the wisdom and the love which planned and carried out the design.

And yet, I think we may add more, we have fellowship with God in the most prominent *characteristics of that plan*. Throughout the whole way of salvation, we have seen displayed the justice and the mercy of God, each with undimmed luster. We have seen His grace in forgiving the sinner, but we have seen His holiness in avenging sin upon the Substitute. We have seen His truthfulness acting in two ways; His truth in threat—by no means sparing the guilty; His truth in the promise—“passing by transgression, iniquity and sin.” Throughout the whole divine plan of salvation, there is not a single blot upon any of the attributes of the Most High! “Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord God of Sabaoth,” is still the song of angels, even when they see sinners who were once the vilest of the vile brought to share their joys, and sing their songs. And, brothers and sisters do not you and I feel we have fellowship with God in this? Would you have Him unjust that you might be saved? I think you would say, “Never! Never! Not even for my sake let Him be unjust.” Would you have Him unloving to others, that He might make *you* His favorite? No! And there is no trace of anything like this. You would not have him retract His threat, for then you might fear that He would forget His promise! I am sure, as you look upon the character of God as He manifests it in the face of Jesus Christ; your soul is filled with inexpressible and delightful adoration. You can sing unto Him, “Great are You, O God. Your mercy endures forever.” And taking up the words of David, you can say, “I will sing of mercy

and of judgment. Unto You, O God, will I sing!” In the purpose, then, in the object of that purpose, in the plan by which the purpose is achieved and in the characteristics of that plan, the believer in Christ has fellowship or sweet concord with the Father.

But to proceed a step further—we have a most divine and precious communion with the Father in *the objects of His love*. When two persons love the same thing, their affection becomes a tie between them. The two may love each other, but when in the course of providence, children are brought into the house, their children become another bond between their parents; each parent mutually gives their hearts to their little ones, and feels that their hearts are yet more fully given the one to the other. Now, there is a tie between God the Father and our souls, for did He not say, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”? And cannot you and I add, “Yes, He is our beloved Savior, in whom we are well pleased”? Is it not written, “It pleased the Father to bruise Him”? And do we not feel that we have found a divine pleasure and satisfaction in looking into His wounds, His agonies, and His death? And has not the Father determined to glorify His Son Jesus? And is not the fondest thought of our heart that we may help to glorify Him here on earth, and may spread His glories even in heaven by telling to the angels and principalities, and powers, the height and depth of His loving-kindness? Does the Father love the Son?—even so do we love Him, not to the same infinite extent, for we are finite beings—yet with sincerity, even as the Father loves Jesus, so sincerely do we love Him—

“A very wretch, Lord! I should prove,
Had I no love for Thee!
Rather than not my Savior love,
O may I cease to be!”

So in this, then, we have fellowship with the Father, seeing that we are both agreed in loving the Son. Does the Father love the *saints*?—even so do we! Does He declare that “Precious shall their blood be in His sight”? Does He bear and carry them, and show His interest for them? Has He not said that “His delight is in His people,” and that “they are His peculiar portion,” and His “choice heritage”? My soul, can you not say, in the midst of all your doubts and fears—“I know that I have passed from death unto life, because I love the brethren”? Can you not protest, “O my heart, that the excellent of the earth are all your delight; where they dwell, I would dwell; where they die, I would die; their portion shall be my portion, their God shall be my God forever and ever”? In this, too, we have fellowship with the Father.

But you know, beloved, the word “fellowship” not only signifies concord of heart, but it implies *a carrying out of that concord a little further, in converse or mutual communication*. May the Holy Spirit grant that we may not say a word which is not strictly verified by our experience! And I hope we can say we have had converse with the Divine Father. We have not seen Him at any time, nor have we beheld His shape. It has not been given to us, like Moses, to be put in the cleft of the rock, and to see the back parts, or the train of the invisible Jehovah; but yet we have spoken to Him; we have said to Him, “Abba, Father.” We have saluted Him in that title which came from our very heart, “Our Father, who are in heaven.” We have had access to Him in such a way that we cannot have been deceived. We have found Him, and through the precious blood of Christ, we have come even unto His feet; we have ordered our cause before Him, and we have filled our mouth with arguments; nor has the speaking been all on our side, for He has been pleased to shed abroad, by His Spirit, His love in our hearts! While we have felt the spirit of adoption, He, on the other hand, has

showed to us the loving kindness of a tender Father. We have felt, though no sound was heard; we have known, though no angelic messenger gave us witness, that His Spirit did “bear witness with our spirits that we were born of God.” We were embraced of Him—no more at a distance; we were “brought near by the blood of Christ.” I trust, my brothers and sisters, you can, each of you say—though you wish it could be more intense than it is—“I have in all these things had fellowship with the Father, for I have conversed with Him, and He has spoken to me.” You can join in the words of that hymn —

“If in my Father’s love
I share a filial part,
Send down Your Spirit like a dove,
To rest upon my heart.”

Furthermore, and to conclude upon this point of fellowship with the Father, we can, I think, refer ourselves to the All-wise One, and we can say we have had fellowship with God in this respect, that *the very thing which is His happiness has been our happiness*. That which has been the delight of His Holy Being has been a delight to us. “And what is that?” you ask. Why, brothers and sisters, does not God delight in holiness, in goodness, in mercy, and in loving kindness? And has not that been our delight, too? I am sure our greatest miseries here have been our sins. We do not murmur at our afflictions, if we could but get rid of those sins which bind us down and hamper us when we would mount towards heaven. Holiness is our pleasure, purity is our delight. O, if we could but be perfect even as He is perfect, and freed from sin, even as God our Father is freed from everything like iniquity, then, we would be in heaven, for this is our happiness! The same happiness which God finds in purity and righteousness, we find in it, too.

And if it is the happiness of the Father to have communion with the persons of the Trinity—if the Father delights in His Son, even so do we delight in Him! And with such a delight, that if we told it to the stranger, he would not believe us. And if we spoke it in the worldling's ear, he would think us mad. Jesus, You are the sun of our soul! You are to us the river of which we drink, the bread of which we eat, the air we breathe. You are the basis of our life, and You are the summit of it. You are the prop, the mainstay, the pillar, the beauty, the joy of our being! If we have but You, we can ask nothing besides, for You are all-in-all, and if we have You not, we are wretched and undone! So, then, we have fellowship with the Father, because that which is His happiness is most certainly our happiness.

And so, also, that which is the Father's *employment* is our employment. I speak not of you all, He knows whom He has chosen. We cannot join with the Father in upholding all worlds, we cannot send forth floods of light at the rising of the sun, we cannot feed the cattle on a thousand hills, nor can we give food and life to all creatures that have breath. But there is something which we can do which He does. He does good to all His creatures, and we can do good also. He bears witness to His Son Jesus, and we can bear witness, too. "The Father works hitherto" that His Son may be glorified, and we work, too; O You Eternal Worker! It is Yours to save souls, and we are co-workers with You! We are His husbandry, we are His building; He scatters the seed of truth, we scatter it, too. His words speak comfort, and our words comfort the weary, too, when God the Spirit is with us. We hope we can say, "For us to live is Christ," and is not this what God lives for, too? We desire nothing so much as to glorify Him, and this is the Father's will, as well as Jesus Christ's prayer, "Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You." Do you not see, brethren, we stand on the same scaffold with the eternal God? When we lift our hand, He

lifts up His eternal arm! When we speak, He speaks, too, and speaks the same thing. When we purpose Christ's glory, He purposes that glory, too; when we long to bring home the wandering sheep, and to recall the prodigal sons, He longs to do the same! In that respect, we can say, "Truly we have fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."

And now, I must turn with some brevity to announce also, and to affirm the fact, that we have fellowship with the Son as well as with the Father. In both these matters, we are like little children who have begun to speak or learn their letters. We have not yet attained. O brothers and sisters, though I say we have fellowship with the Father, yet, how little we have of it compared with what we hope to have! This fellowship is like the river in Ezekiel; at the first it is up to the ankles, and afterwards it is up to the knees, and then up to the loins, and then it becomes a river to swim in. There are, I fear, few of us who have waded where there is a river to swim in. But, blessed be God, though it is only up to the ankles, yet we have fellowship, and if we have but a little of it, that little is the seed of more, and the certain pledge of greater joys to come! Well, now, we have fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, I think we can say, for our hearts are united to Him—we cannot speak of this, but I think we can weep about it—

"Jesus, we love Your charming name,
'Tis music to our ears."

We may sometimes have to sing—

"'Tis a point I long to know;
Oft it causes anxious thought;
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I His, or am I not?"

But I think we can come back after all and answer, “Yes, Lord, You know all things, You know that I love You.” At any rate, it is strange that I should never be happy without You. It is singular that I can find no peace anywhere but in You. If I did not love You, should I have such longings after You? Would I have such mourning and such sorrow when You are gone? Would it be so dark without You if I were still blind, and would it be so bright with You if I did not see a glimmering of Your light, and some rays of Your beauties? Beloved, Satan may say what he will, and our sense may seem to contradict the statements, but still our soul follows hard after Christ! He is to us all our salvation, and all our desire. We have, then, fellowship with Christ since His heart is set in us, and our heart is knit to Him.

Further, we have had some small degree of fellowship with Him in His sufferings. We have not yet “resisted unto blood striving against sin,” but we have carried His cross, and we have suffered His reproach. There have been some who could say—

“Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow You.”

And others of us, whose path has been somewhat smoother, have, nevertheless, felt the cross within us—for the new spirit within us has had to contend with all that once we loved. There have been wars and fights, and a perpetual conflict—not only from without—but what is far more severe, from within also! Yet, if it should cause more sorrow, we would still follow *Him*, for we count it as our riches that we may bear the reproach of Christ as He bore reproach for us! I trust, my brothers and sisters, you that profess to be His followers do not blush to acknowledge His name. I hope you do not turn your backs in the day of battle! If you do, you may question

whether your fellowship is with the Son, Jesus Christ, but if you can welcome shame, and hail reproach because He remembers you, then, in this, you have been conformed unto His death, and have been made partakers of His sufferings!

I have sometimes thought it were worth all the bitterness if we might drink of His cup, and be baptized with His baptism. We can have no Gethsemane with all its bloody sweat, yet, we have had our Gethsemanes, too; we cannot die on Calvary, but I hope we have been crucified with Him, and the world is crucified to us, and we unto the world. We cannot go into the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, yet, we have been buried with Him in baptism unto death that like as Jesus Christ rose from the dead by the glory of the Father, and even so we also might rise to newness of life. And I hope, inasmuch as He has risen and ascended up on high, though our bodies are still here, yet we have set our affection on things above and not on things on the earth. And as He has been raised up, and made to sit together with His Father, I hope we know the meaning of that passage, “He has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” And as He is to come and reign, I hope we also know something of that, for He has made us kings and priests unto our God, and we shall reign with Him forever and ever. From the manger to the cross, and from the cross to the millennium, there should be in the Christian’s experience a blessed fellowship. We ought to know Christ in His obscurity, and littleness—the Baby Jesus being in our hearts. We ought to know Him in His wilderness temptations—ourselves being tempted in all points. We ought to know Him in His blasphemies and slanders—ourselves being accounted by man to be as Beelzebub, and as the offscouring of all things. We must know Him in His passion, in His agony, and in His death. Then, “Thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ,” we

may know Him in His triumphs—in His ascension upon high, in His seating at the right hand of God, and in His coming to judge the quick and the dead, for we, too, shall judge angels through Jesus Christ our Lord! We have, I hope in some humble measure in these respects, fellowship with the Son, Jesus Christ.

But our fellowship has assumed also a practical form, in that the same desires and aspirations which were in Christ when He was on the earth are in us now. Oh, we have uttered feelingly the very words of Christ, “Did you not know that I must be about my Father’s business?” And when we could not do all we would—when there seemed to be some insurmountable obstacle in the path of our usefulness—we have, nevertheless, said, “My meat and my drink is to do the will of Him who sent me.” And when at any time we have been wearied in the Master’s service, we have yet found such good cheer therein, that we could say with Him, “I have meat to eat that you know not of.” “The zeal of Your house has eaten me up.” And at times, in the thoughts of serving God, and even of suffering for Him, we have said, “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it is accomplished!” For we have desired with desire to eat that passover, that we, too, might say of our humble work, “It is finished,” and commend our spirit into the eternal hands. Oh, have you ever wept with Christ as He did over poor Jerusalem? Did London’s vices ever bring the tears to your eyes? Did you ever weep over hard-hearted souls, perhaps in your own family? Have you ever cried as He did, “How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you would not”? Oh, I hope, without egotism, without saying more than we have really felt, we have thirsted and panted to bring others up out of their degradation and their fall, till we have felt that if we might be offered ourselves, if by our

sacrifice souls might be saved, we would be willing to have it said, “He saved others, himself he cannot save.” In this, then, we have had fellowship with Christ.

And yet, further, as I have said, fellowship requires converse. Oh, you daughters of Jerusalem, have we not had converse with Him? Tell of that happy day when we went forth to meet king Solomon and crowned Him “with the crown wherewith His mother crowned Him in the day of His espousals, and in the day of the gladness of His heart.” When He took us up into His chariot, the bottom thereof was of silver, and the sides thereof lined with love for the daughters of Jerusalem, and we rode in Covenant safety and in royal pomp with Him. When the king came into His palace and He said, “Let the fatlings be killed, eat; yes, eat abundantly, and drink abundantly, O beloved!” And we ate of all His sweet wines, and of all His luscious fruits which He had laid up in store for His beloved till we said, “Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick with love, His left hand is under my head, and His right arm does embrace me.” Brothers and sisters, we have leaped right out of the body to embrace Him—at least so we have thought—from excessive joy and that, too, when there was nothing in the world to give us contentment, when our prospects were blighted, when our health has failed us, when the sun of this world was quenched! Then, He came forth, even He who is all-in-all and lifted the light of His countenance upon us!

You have had, I hope, some few of these in-flowings of love, when you have eaten angels’ food, when you have forgotten the dry bread and moldy crusts that you had in the wallet of your experience, and did eat the new corn of the kingdom and did drink the new wine with your blessed and divine Master; when you no longer traveled in rumbling chariots, but your soul was like the swiftly-speeding chariots of

Amminadib; when you flew after your beloved in transport so divine that tongue can never tell, and lips can never describe the sacred rapture! Yes, “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

We have but a few minutes remaining for the second head which might very well demand an entire sermon.

II. There was, secondly, AN AFFECTIONATE DESIRE, LEADING TO APPROPRIATE EFFORT. This affectionate desire was that others might have fellowship with us. Having found the honey, we cannot eat it alone; having tasted that the Lord is gracious, it is one of the first instincts of the newborn nature to send us out crying, “Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters, and he who has no money come, buy and eat; yes, all come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price.” We would that others had fellowship with us in all respects, except our sins; for we can say with the apostle, “I would to God that you were not only almost, but altogether such as I am, except these bonds!” But these bonds of *sin* we would not wish that any should bear. My hearers, we would that you had fellowship with us in the peace we feel with God our Father, in the access which we have to His throne, in the confidence which we have in the truth of His promise, in the overflowing joys we experience when He manifests Himself to us! We would that you had our hopes, that you could look forward to death, and the grave with the same delight as we can, expecting to be transformed into His Image, and to see Him as He is! We wish you had our faith, only more of it—that you might have the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen! We wish that you had fellowship with us in prevailing prayer, that you knew how to cast your burdens upon the Lord—that you understood how to bring every blessing from on high by pleading the merits of the Savior! We wish to gather up all in one, that in everything which is lovely, and of good

repute, in everything which is happy, ennobling, divine and everlasting, you might be made partakers and have fellowship with us!

And this desire leads the child of God to make use of an appropriate effort, and what is that? It is to tell others what he has seen, and what he has heard! Now, I shall try to use that means this morning, for I think, perhaps, the illustration of fact may be better than any illustration of words. Do I not address many here who never had any fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ? Perhaps you hardly know what it means, and when you hear what it means, you attach no importance to it. It is nothing to you to talk with God; you never dream of such a thing as speaking to Christ, and Christ speaking to you! Ah, if you knew its sweetness, you would never, never be content till you had it, you would thirst with such a thirst that you would never cease, but thirst till you drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate. Well now, soul, that you may have fellowship with us in these things, let me tell you what I have heard, and known, and seen, for this is what the text tells me to speak of. I have known and seen that Christ is one who is ready to forgive you—able to forgive you! Oh, shall I ever forget when I first went to Him, laden with iniquity, and black with sin? I was bowed down by five years of conviction, which had rendered my fears, despair—and my doubts had gathered till they seemed impenetrable to the light! I went to Him, and I thought He would reject me. I thought Him to be hard and unwilling to forgive. But I only looked on Him, only *looked* at Him—one glimpse of tearful eyes at a crucified Savior, and at that moment, without a pause, the burden rolled away, the guilt was gone, peace of mind took the place of despair, and I could sing, “I’m forgiven! I’m forgiven!” I had many sins, but He took them all away. Some of those sins were deeply aggravated. I would not tell them in a human ear,

but they were gone, in one instant, too—not because of any merit, but gone freely and graciously of His abundant mercy—according to the riches of His loving-kindness in Christ Jesus the Lord! Now, what we have seen and heard we do testify, that you also may have fellowship with us, for, “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.” Still He is willing to receive you; He is able to forgive you. Laden with guilt and full of woe, come to that full relief! Make no tarrying! “Linger not in all the plain!” Let not your heavy heart tempt you to keep yourself from Him! He stands with open arms ready to pardon, with open heart, willing to receive! No, He runs! I think I see Him. Though you are yet far off, He runs and meets you! He falls upon your neck. He kisses you. He says, “Take off his rags; clothe him in the best robe; put shoes on his feet, and a ring upon his hand, and let us eat and be merry, for the dead is alive and the lost is found.”

But I testify yet again, soul, that after you have once believed in Christ, and received your pardon, you will find Him to be willing to keep your soul from sin! I thought that even if Christ forgave me, it would be impossible for me to break off evil habits, and the lusts of the flesh. And I have known many scores of men who were swearers, and they said they should never be able to rinse their mouths of their oaths. They were drunks, too, and they said that drink would get the upper hand of them yet. But we have seen, and we have testified that when we believe in Christ, He changes the heart! He renews the nature, makes us hate the things we loved before, and love the things we once despised! We have seen it, and we testify it. O drunkard, He can make you sober! Unchaste man, He can make you virtuous! There is no lust which His arm cannot subdue, no mighty sin which He cannot drive out! He shall make you run in the way of His commandments with delight—you shall neither turn aside to the right hand nor to the left!

“But” says another, “if He did uphold for a while, I should never be able to hold on.” What I have seen and heard, that I declare unto you. Blessed be His name, I am yet young in grace, but He has been faithful to me. The child believed, and the child now testifies that God is faithful, and has not once forsaken nor left him, but preserved him! I half wish this morning that gray hairs were on my head, that I might give force to this testimony of “what I have seen and heard.” I remember well, when declaring that God was a faithful God, my good old grandfather who was sitting behind me in the pulpit, came forward and said, “My grandson can tell you that, but I can bear witness to it. I have passed my three score years, and ten, but still He has been faithful and true”—

“Even down to old age, all His people shall prove
His sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love!
And when hoary hairs shall their temples adorn,
Like lambs they shall still in His bosom be borne.”

We testify this to you, that you may have fellowship with us, for “our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

I have this much to say, and if I should never preach again, and if this might be the last discourse I should ever deliver in this world, I would wish to make this my final testimony. There is that joy in religion that I never dreamed of. He is a good Master whom I have served; that is a blessed faith which He has bestowed upon me, and yields such blessed hope, that—

“I would not change my blessed estate
For all the world calls good or great!”

And if I had to die like a dog, and there were no hereafter, I would still prefer to be a Christian, and the humblest Christian minister to being a king or an emperor, for I am persuaded there are more delights in Christ—more joy in one glimpse of His face than is to be found in all the praises of this harlot-world, and in all the delights which it can yield to us in its sunniest and brightest days! And I am persuaded that what He has been till now, He will be to the end; and where He has begun a good work, He will carry it on. Yes, sinners, Christ's cross is a hope that we can die by—which can take us down to the grave without a fear—which can make us shout in the midst of the swelling waters of Jordan, can make us transported with delight even when we are bowed down with physical pain or nervous distress. There is that in Christ, I say, which can make us triumph over the gloomiest terrors of grim death, and make us rejoice in the darkest of tempests which can blacken the grave. Trust! Trust in the Lord, for our testimony, and that of all His people is that He is worthy to be trusted! "Wait on the Lord—be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart—wait, I say, on the Lord."

410 NOT NOW, BUT HEREAFTER! –
JOB 21:29-31

A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Morning, September 22nd, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Have you not asked them who go by the way? And do you not know their signs, that the wicked is reserved for the day of destruction? They shall be brought forth for the day of wrath. Who shall declare his way to his face? And who shall repay him for what he has done?”—Job 21:29-31

THE SERMON which I preached two Lord’s days ago upon the accidents, has caused considerable consternation among pious people with weak heads [*See Sermon #408*]. Their idea, that all calamities are *judgments*, is so deep-seated a prejudice, and so favorite a dogma, that our exposure of its absurdity is, in their opinion, eminently calculated to encourage sin and quiet the consciences of offenders. Now, I feel quite at ease in this matter, and am confident that I have done service to our great cause—even though the timid should be alarmed, and the superstitious should be annoyed. Our gracious God and Father has seen fit to give us a whole book of the Bible upon the subject; the main drift of the Book of Job is to prove that temporal afflictions are *not* evidences of the Lord’s displeasure, and I beg the modern Bildads and Zophars to reconsider their position, lest they, too, should be found to be “speaking wickedly for God, and talking deceitfully for Him” (Job 13:7).

In my very soul I feel that if evil days shall come upon me, if poverty, desertion, and disease should place me upon Job's dunghill, I shall point to that sermon with pleasure, and I will say to those who will tell me that God is angry with me, and has judged me to be unworthy, "No, you know not what you say, for the judgment is not already passed, nor is this the field of execution; neither disease, nor bereavements, nor poverty, can prove a man to be wicked, nor do they even hint that the chosen are divided from the hearts of Christ!" O my beloved friends settle it in your hearts that men are not to be judged according to their present circumstances! Learn like David to understand *their end*. It will save you from writing bitter things against yourselves in the time of trouble, and prevent your scanning the works of providence, and measuring the infinite by line and plummet.

It is mainly my business, today, to deal with those who may wickedly continue in sin, because their judgment tarries. If the Lord does not in this world visit the ungodly with stripes, this is but the surer evidence, that in the *world to come*, there is a solemn retribution for the impenitent! If the affliction, which is here accorded to men, is not the punishment of sin, we turn to Scripture and discover what that punishment *will be*, and we are soon informed, that it is something far heavier than any calamities which occur in this life—something infinitely more tremendous than the most disastrous accident, the most shocking mutilation, or the most painful death! I know that there are some in these days who are like those in the time of the royal preacher, of whom He said, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." Should I be addressing some this morning, who have found a stupid quiet for their consciences, in the fact that God does not *here*, usually visit men's sins upon their heads, let me put it to them whether

such peace is reasonable. There is a city which has revolted. A great king has threatened them with entire destruction for the revolt. He does not, in hurried passion, send against them a handful of soldiers to inflict instant and petty chastisement—he waits awhile, and marshals all his hosts till every battalion has been put in array, till every mighty man has girded on his armor. Fools! Will you draw consolation from the delay of your destroyer? Will you say, because he has not ridden forth against you on the very day of your rebellion, that therefore this is a time of revelry and mirth? No, inasmuch as he is gathering his hosts for the battle, let it cause you to tremble—for he shall break down your walls, and give your whole company to the sword! Imagine yourselves voyagers, far out upon the sea. A black cloud darkens the sky. You say you fear not the cloud because it is not at present pouring forth the flood. But, that is the reason why you *should* fear it, for the cloud is waiting until it grows and spreads—till under the wing of darkness, the egg of cloud has been hatched into the black screaming eagle of the storm! The clouds are hurrying from east and west, mustering for the strife! Mark you not the sea heaving heavily in sympathy with heaven's convulsions? Behold how all the dread artillery of heaven is gathering up for one tremendous shock. Fools! Do you say you will not fear because the thundercloud has not yet burst, because as yet, the breath of wind has not transformed itself into the blast of hurricane? It is gathering, sirs, congregating its forces, and accumulating its fury, and the longer that it gathers, the more terrible shall be the moment when it bursts upon your devoted heads! And so today, God's clouds that float in the sky, the calamities of providence, are not pouring on you the tempest of wrath; but, is this a reason why you should be at peace? No! The clouds are gathering, every sin is adding to the mass, every day of God's long-suffering is covering heaven in blacker sable! Every moment

that He spares, He does but prepare to punish in more tremendous force; and dread and direful shall be the day, when at last, omnipotence itself, shall come to the assistance of outraged justice, and you shall feel that God is God, as much in punishing sin, as in the making of the worlds!

It was a fable of the old Jewish rabbis, that when the angel Gabriel flew he used both wings, because he always came with good tidings; but that when Michael flew, bearing God's sword to smite through the loins of kings, he always flew with one wing. But, Michael arrives as surely at his destined goal as Gabriel himself! The feet of the avenging deities may seem to be shod with lead for tardiness, and their tread may be as noiseless as wool, but they are as sure as the feet of mercy! I know when God comes to bless, the axles of His chariot are hot with speed, and His steeds are white with foam, and when He comes to curse, He travels slowly, with many a sigh, for He wills not the death of any, but had rather "that he should turn unto Him and live." But, remember, in judgment, He comes in all His might, and He shall be discovered to be not less a God when He smites than when He gives the kisses of His lips, and lifts the pardoned sinner into acceptance and favor!

We shall now deal with the sorrowful topic of the punishment of sin in the *world to come*. I have preached less upon this subject than almost upon any other, and yet, it is always thrown in our teeth that we delight to dwell upon these horrors! I never come to this subject without the deepest distress of heart, and God alone shall know, how many tears it costs these eyes when I have to deal out as God's faithful ambassador, the thunders of His law! I delight to preach of Calvary, and of divine love, and of unsearchable grace. But, this theme is to me *the burden* of the Lord; we must not, we dare not keep it back; fidelity to conscience, truthfulness to God, love to the souls of

men, compel us to make this a part of our ministry—not keeping back any part of the price!

I will divide the discourse this morning into three parts. First, I shall speak of *the punishment of sin, by way of affirmation*—or prove that it must be so. Secondly, *by way of explanation*—of what kind, and nature, this punishment must be. And then, thirdly, *by way of expostulation*—plead with those, who are yet in the land of mercy, that they would hasten to the voice of wisdom, and that God's grace may turn them from the error of their ways.

I. First, then, by way of affirmation—THERE MUST BE A PUNISHMENT FOR SIN.

Job says that this is a truth of God, so written upon the very nature of man, that even those who go by the way, the ignorant traveler, and wayfarer, dares not for a moment deny that such is the case! “Have you not asked them who go by the way? And, do you not know their signs?” And truly it is so. If there is one intuitive truth which man perceives without need of argument, it is that sin deserves to be punished, and since sin is not punished *here*, it follows that the punishment must be endured in the world to come.

Let us, however, very briefly review the argument. Sin must be punished from *the very nature of God*. God *IS*; if God is God, He *must* be just! You can no more separate the idea of justice from the idea of God, than you can omniscience, or omnipresence, or omnipotence. To suppose of a God who was not omnipotent, is to make a supposition which is contradictory in its terms, for the term “God” includes that thought. And, to suppose an unjust God, is to imagine an absurdity—you have used, I repeat it, contradictory terms—justice is included in the very *thought* of God! See how the oppressed always recognize this. The slave who has long been trampled under the feet of a tyrannical master, with his back

fresh from the gory lash, lifts up his eyes to God the avenger, for he feels instinctively that God must be just! Nationalities who have made appeals to arms, but have been subdued again to serfdom, at last in their despair cry out to God, for this is the bottom of man's thoughts, and the one which is sure to come forth when pain has emptied out his lighter notions, that God does execute righteousness and judgment "for all who are oppressed." So, too, when man would affirm a thing to be true, he calls upon God to be his witness, because, in his innermost nature, he feels that God will be a just and impartial witness. If he thought not so, it would be ridiculous to call upon God to witness to his statement! Note how the tearful eyes, the groaning mind, the bursting heart, all turn instinctively to the Judge of all the earth. Man feels that God *must be just*. But, how just must He be? How *just*, if crowned heads who do injustice shall go unpunished? How *just*, if the adulterer, the thief, the liar, and the hypocrite unpunished here, should go unpunished in the world to come? Where is your justice, God, if this world is all? We say, "Alas for love if you were the end and nothing beyond, O earth!" And we may add, alas, for justice, too; for where could it live, where could it dwell, unless there were a world to come, in which God will right the wrongs, and avenge Himself upon all who have trampled on His laws?

Not only does His very nature show this, but, *those acts of God*, which are recorded in Revelation, prove incontestably that He will by no means spare the guilty. There have been judgments. I am not now appealing to the notions and opinions of ill-judging man, but to the Inspired Chronicles, for I will quote those judgments alone which the Word of God calls such. Adam sinned. 'Twas but the touching of an apple; Eden was blasted, Adam was exiled. The world sinned. They ate, they drank; they married, and were given in marriage. They forgot the Most High. The fountains of the great deep gave forth their

floods; the cisterns of heaven emptied out their cataracts. The entire world was drowned; and the last shriek of the strong swimmer, yielding at last to universal death, told us that God is just! Look across to the cities of the plain. When they had wholly given themselves up to unnatural lusts, God rained fire and brimstone out of heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah. And when He did so, what did He but write in letters of fire—“God is just, He furiously avenges and terribly punishes sin.” Behold, too, Pharaoh and all his hosts drowned in the Red Sea. For what purpose was Pharaoh raised up, but that God might show forth His power in him—might prove to the world that there were vessels of wrath, and that God knew how to fill them to the brim, and break them as with a rod of iron? Look to Palestine, and behold its kings put to death by the sword of the Lord and His servant Joshua! What does a land stained in blood mean? It means this that the race had offended much against heaven, and God, that man might have some glimpses of His terrible justice, declared that He would root out the races of Canaan, and would have war with Amalek from generation to generation! It is impossible to reconcile Old Testament history with the effeminate notion of Neological divinity—that God is only a universal father and not a governor and a judge! If these gentlemen will quietly read some of those awful passages in the Old Testament, they cannot—unless they should deny the inspiration of the passage, or attempt to tone down its meaning—they cannot but confess, that they see there far less a loving parent, than a God dressed in arms! A God of whom we may say, “The Lord is a man of war, the Lord is His name. Your right hand, O Lord, Your right hand, O Lord, has dashed in pieces Your enemies.” A God without justice is what this modern church is seeking after! These new doctrines would fashion a deity destitute of those sublime attributes which keep

the world in awe, and command for Him the reverence of His creatures!

This brings me to my third argument. Not only do the nature and the acts of God prove that He will punish sin, but, *the very necessities of the world demand it*. Imagine the contrary. Put in all our Christian pulpits men who would teach sinners that there is no punishment for sin. Let them say to them, “What you suffer here is to be looked upon as God’s judgment on your offense; but, there is no world to come in which your sins will be visited upon your heads.” friends, you may at once advise the government to multiply the number of our jails tenfold! If there is no punishment for sin in another world; if it is so light and trifling an offense, that the little sufferings of this life are sufficient atonement for it, then you have thrown up the floodgates, which have up to now, dammed up the overflowing floods! You will soon see society swept from its moorings, there will be no possibility that men will seek to be honest, when they find that honesty or dishonesty, are terms which have but a trifling difference between them! If sin is so slight a thing, men will think virtue to be a slight thing, too! And, if there is so little punishment for crime, they will soon think that there can be but little reason for virtue, and then where will be our commonwealths, and our social compacts? The best lawgivers, however amiably disposed they may be, find that they must back up their laws with penalties. A state which would be founded upon laws without penalties, could not last a week, or if it lasted, you would find that while the laws would be disregarded, there would be more death, and more suffering than there had been before! When was the guillotine most at work, but when there was loudest boast of liberty, and men’s living without law? When would there be the most of murder, but when there should no more be heard the threat of condemnation, and when they who were assassins

might be permitted to go abroad untouched? There must be punishment for the world's own good, to say nothing of the nature of God, which for its dignity and holiness, necessarily demands, that every offense and transgression should receive its just recompense of reward.

But, further—I affirm the punishment of sin from *the atonement of Christ*. Friends, if there is no necessity that sin should be punished, why did Jesus die? Why, Father, did you send Your only-begotten and well-beloved Son, and lay upon Him the iniquities of us all? Was He needed for an example? He might have been our example without dying, in fact if this were all, virtue, crowned and glorified, might have been quite as noble an incentive to goodness as virtue mocked and crucified! He was needed that He might take our sins, and having taken our sins, it became absolutely necessary that Jesus Christ should die. In the death of Christ, if sin must not necessarily be punished, I see nothing but the death of a martyr like James, or Peter, or Polycarp, the death of a man murdered for being better than his fellows. And, why do we make this fuss and noise about salvation by the death of Christ if that is all? Why has the Christian Church existed to be a false witness, to testify to a fiction? Why has her blood been shed these many centuries to maintain that the blood of Jesus Christ takes away the sin of the world—if the sin could be taken away without punishment? The wounds of Christ have no meaning, His precious blood has no value, His thorn-crowned head is not worthy of worship, nor is His death worthy of daily ministry, unless it be that He suffered “the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God.” God in Christ punished the sins of His people; and if He did it in Christ, unpardoned sinner, rest assured He will do it *in you*! If the imputed sins of Christ brought Him the agonies of Gethsemane, what will your sins bring you? If guilt that was not His own brought Him an exceeding heaviness,

“even unto death,” what will your sins bring you, sins, remember, which *are your own*? “He that spared not His own Son” will never spare rebels! He who did not spare His Son a single lash or a single stroke, will certainly make no exemption in *your* favor if you live and die impenitent, and reject the gospel of Christ!

Besides, my dear friends permit me to say, that those who think that sin is not to be punished, are generally the worst of men. Men hate hell for the reason that murderers hate the gallows! The degenerate Youngman, who was executed on the top of yonder jail, informed the chaplain that he objected on principle, to all capital punishment—an objection natural enough when it was his own inevitable doom! They, who dissent from the doctrine of divine justice, are interested in forming that opinion; the wish is father to the thought, they would have their sin unpunished, they hope it may be, and then they say it will be! You will not listen to a thief’s objection to a policeman; you do not imagine that a criminal’s objection to a judge is very valid, and the sinner’s objection to hell lies only here, that he will not repent, and he therefore fears the dread certainty that he shall be punished. Besides, even these worst of men who pretend not to believe, do believe. Their fears betray the secret conviction of their consciences, and on their dying beds, or in a storm, whenever they have thought they were about to see with their own eyes the stern realities of eternity, their fears have proved them to be as strong believers as those who profess the faith! Infidelity is not honest. It may profess to be, but it is not. I think that our judges are right in not accepting the oath of an infidel. It is not possible that he should be honest in the notion that there is no God, when God is around him in every leaf, in every tree, and in every star in the sky! It is not possible that a man should be honest when he calls himself an atheist. Nor do we believe that any man can

speaking the dictates of his inmost heart, when he says that sin will never be punished, and that he may sin with impunity. His conscience gives him the lie; he knows it *must* be so, and that God will visit his offenses upon his head!

I shall not enlarge further, except to say in gathering up my thoughts, impenitent sinner, be sure of this—there shall not a sin of yours fall to the ground unremembered, “For every idle word that you shall speak, God will bring you into judgment.” How much more for every blasphemous word, and for every rebellious act? Do not wrap yourself up in the delusive thought that sin will escape unpunished. Even if it should be so, then the Christian is as well off as you are! But, since righteousness will be laid to the line, and judgment to the plummet, what will become of you? Be wise before it is too late! Believe today what you will find out to be a fact before long! God has revealed it to you, His Revelation has tokens and signs which prove its divine origin. Believe what He has revealed; do not say in your heart, “I will never believe there is a hell unless one should come from it.” Do you not see that if one should come from it, then you would not believe at all? You would say, “If one person came from hell, then another may, and I may myself.” It would take away all your dread of future punishment if any spirit should come back from it, yet, I think the shrieks of dying sinners, the cries which some of you have heard coming up from the death beds of blasphemers, ought to be enough evidence that there is a world to come whereof we speak! And, that there are terrors of the law which are happily concealed today from your eyes, and from your ears, but which you may soon know, and know far better than the best words can teach you! By your own feelings, by your own everlasting despair, and banishment from God, you will know them, if you repent not!

II. I turn now, to the second portion of the discourse—**THE NATURE OF THIS PUNISHMENT** by way of explanation.

How will God punish sin? The text says, “The wicked is reserved for the day of destruction, they shall be brought forth for the day of wrath.” The old Puritan preachers, such men as Alleine, who wrote the *“Alarm,”* and others of his class, always gave a very gross picture of the world to come. They could never represent it except by brimstone, flames, and dancing fiends, and such like horrors. They were conscientious in the drawing of the picture, and to them the terrors of the Lord gross, corporeal, unscriptural ideas of hell, but rather let us feel that it is a great mystery concerning which we must rather follow Scripture than *imagination*. The first punishment which will be executed upon man for his sins will be punishment to his soul. The soul leaves the body; the body is *here* enclosed in the coffin, rotting in the tomb. The disembodied spirit will appear before its God. It will then know at once what its future destination shall be. The great judgment will not then have been held, the Judge will not have officially pronounced the sentence, but the soul, anticipating the sentence, will feel its execution. Memory will begin to reflect upon past sins, past mercies unimproved, past opportunities neglected, and past offenses which have long been forgotten. Then, the conscience will begin to thunder. “You did this wantonly,” says Conscience. “You did it against light and knowledge, you did despise Christ, you did neglect the day of mercy, you have been a suicide, and you have destroyed yourself!” Then the fears will come in, the fears of the day of judgment, when the body shall be reunited with the soul. And, those fears will sting the man with thoughts like these. “What will you say when He comes to judge you? How will you bear the eyes of Him that shall read you through and through?” *Now* you know that what was preached to you on earth is true. “You are no infidel *now*. *Now* the truth is not kept out of your soul by the dullness of your fleshly body; you *see* you *know* it. What will become of you when

earth shall pass away, and heaven shall shake, and hell shall gape to receive its prey?" So the spirit shall be virtually in hell before the body goes there! This shall be the first punishment of sin.

Then, when the day predestined shall have come, the trumpet of the archangel shall ring through the air—the trump this time of the second resurrection—for the dead in Christ shall have already risen, and have reigned with Christ upon the earth. Then rings the clarion note that wakes the dead! They start up, and the soul returns to its old house, the body. Then it receives its sentence. It is brought forth as the text says, "For the day of wrath"—it had been reserved in chains before, in blackness and darkness. It is now brought forth to receive the sentence, that the *body* must begin its hell! Then, mark you beyond a doubt, for we cannot understand Scripture, and especially the words of Christ without it, the body shall have pains meet for its offenses! Your members were servants of your lusts, they shall now be partakers of the wage of your soul; the feet that carried you in the paths of sin, shall tread the fiery road; the eyes which gazed with lustful glance, shall now be made to weep the scalding tear; the teeth which ministered to your gluttony, shall now gnash for pain! The tongue which talked so exceeding proudly against God, shall be "tormented in this flame." There shall certainly be a punishment for the body as well as for the soul, for what else did Christ mean when He said, "Fear Him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell." I will not enlarge upon what sort of punishment this will be, suffice it to say that whatever it is, it will be *just*. The sinner in hell shall not endure one iota more than he deserves! He shall have the due reward of his deeds—no more. God is not unjust to punish men arbitrarily—I know of no arbitrary condemnation! There is no such thing as sovereign damnation! It will be justice—inflexible, I grant you— but, yet, not such as shall pass the bounds of due and right desert. God will give to

man only the harvest of his own deeds. He sowed the wind, and he shall reap the whirlwind. You shall not have the consolation in hell of saying that you did not deserve it—for in hell you will be made to feel, “I brought this on myself. I destroyed myself. It is true I am in pain, but I am the father of my own pains. I planted the tree which yields the bitter fruit. I dug about it, and I watered it. I did the work. I labored, and these are my wages.” And, you will have to feel then and there, that in every pang that rends the heart, God is infinitely just. And then, whatever the pain may be, we know that while it is just, it will be *terrible*. Whose are those awful words, “He shall burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire”? Is this the language of Moses? No, of Christ! It is a remarkable fact that the most frightful descriptions of punishment of another world are from the lips of the Savior! Had Peter spoken them, you would have said Peter was harsh in spirit. It was the Master who spoke them! He who wept over Jerusalem said, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment;” He spoke of “burning up the chaff;” He spoke of “binding hand and foot, and giving them up to the tormentors.” In the compass of revelation there are no words as grim and terrible in their awful suggestiveness, as the words of Him, “who went about doing good.” He who wept and cried, “Come unto Me, you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

And we know, again, that this punishment will be *eternal*. This is the very essence of it. There would be no hell if it were not eternal, for the hope of an end would be the end of fear. If there could be an end to hell at any time, there would be an end to it at once, for no man would feel that desperate despair, if there were a hope that it should come to a close. But, it is eternity, eternity, eternity, that makes punishment hell. This is the bell which tolls the funeral of every hope—eternity, eternity, eternity! To sail across a sea of fire forever, never reaching a

haven; to sink, but never reach the bottom, or to rise to heights of greater agony, and never reach the summit. Oh, brothers and sisters, brothers and sisters, it is not the wrath of God in *this world* that you have so much to fear; the wrath's to come, the wrath's to come! And, it is not the wrath that the soul shall be filled with, when it has been there a thousand years—it is the *wrath to come!* They will go on sinning, and God will go on avenging; they will go on blaspheming, and they shall go on gnawing their tongues; they shall go on hating God, and they shall go on feeling His anger! They shall go from bad to worse in character, and doubtless, from bad to worse in agony! O God, help us to escape from this awful thing—the wrath, the wrath to come!

III. I close now, by offering SOME FEW WORDS OF EXPOSTULATION.

You will kindly look at the 31st verse. He says, “Who shall declare his way to his face? And who shall repay him for what he has done?” Now, there are many men who think they shall come off Scot free, because in this life there are none who will dare to mention their sins to their face. The covetous man is very seldom rebuked for his covetousness. If a man lives an unclean life, he does not usually read books which would prick his conscience. If a man acts dishonorably in his trade, if another should tell him of it, he would be exceedingly insulted. It is true a faithful minister will often make men feel uneasy in their sins, for he will be led by God's direction to give such a description of the offenses, and of the punishment, that he will make sinners tremble in their shoes. But still, are there not some among you here today, who can sin with both your hands, and there is no Elijah to say, “You are the man”? You have none to meet you in Naboth's vineyard, and say to you, “Have you killed and taken possession?” There is perhaps hardly a “still small voice;” though there used to be one—the agonizing

face of your wife when first you had forsaken the way of virtue; the ghastly look of your mother as you were bringing down her gray hairs with sorrow to the grave; the sorrowful gaze of your little children when first their father became a drunk—these were still voices to you, but they are now hushed. When God gives you up, then indeed your damnation slumbers not. But remember, however cheaply you can sin now, God will not fear insulting you; He will bring your sins to your remembrance, and there shall be no consideration of your dignity! He will not consult your feelings, He will not look upon you as a great one; He will bring your sins to remembrance in no courtly phrases, and in no polished terms. You shall find that the lips of justice know not how to make distinctions between you and the basest menial whom you once despised! Now, if a man should speak against your character, it would be libel; but when God speaks of it, you shall not threaten Him! What? Do you think that He will fear and tremble before you? Who are you, O man, that the lips of the Eternal God should be silent about you? Who are you that He should fail to draw your character in black or crimson hues? He will convict you to your face, and you shall be utterly unable to plead guiltless of your sins! And then the text says, “Who shall repay him?” Ah, there is no hand which dares repay you now; you have gone unpunished. No law can touch you, you say, ah, but there is a divine law which overrides the law that is human! And, if the arm of human justice is too short, the arm of God is as long as it is strong, and He will reach you, and to the last jot and tittle pay you your due reward! You shall not escape even in the slightest degree. No pleas and prayers, no tears and excuses, shall have any avail with Him, but till justice shall have had its uttermost farthing, you shall by no means come out from there!

And now, sinner, why will you dare the wrath of God? Why will you run this fearful risk? Why will you make your bed in

hell? Why will you dwell in everlasting burnings? Is it wise, or are you mad, and is your reason gone? Have I preached to you a bugaboo and a fable?—If so, go your way and sin. But oh, if it is true—and it *must* be, unless you are prepared to reject that precious Book and the very name of Christian— if it is true! Soul, I pray you let me feel for you, if you will not feel for yourself! Why dash yourself upon the point of Jehovah's javelin? Why destroy yourself against the points of His shield? What can there be that makes you so in love with ruin? Why will you hug the grave, and embrace destruction? Soul, again I say—Are you mad?—Are you mad?—Are you mad? May the Lord teach you reason, and may He help you to flee to the only refuge where a sinner may find mercy!

I shall close when I have tried to set out the way of Mercy. I have read in the old Histories of England, that Edward the Second, one of our kings, was exceedingly enraged against one of his courtiers. Being out hunting one day, he threatened the courtier with the severest punishment. There was a river between them at the time, and the courtier, thinking that he was perfectly safe, ventured to offer some jeering remark upon the king—telling him that at any rate he would not be likely to chastise him until he got at him. The king, feeling his anger hot within him, told him that the water should not long divide them, leaped into the middle of the stream, and with some difficulty gained the other side. The courtier, in great alarm, fled in terror. The king pursued him with might and main, spurring his horse to the utmost; nor did his anger cease; he carried his drawn sword in his hand with the intention of killing him! At last the courtier, seeing that there was no hope for any escape, knelt down upon the grass, and laying bare his neck, said, “I heartily deserve to die; mercy, King! Mercy!” The king put his sword back into the scabbard in a moment, and said, “While you sought to escape me, I determined to destroy you; but when I

see you humble at my feet, I freely forgive you.” Even so is it with the King of heaven! Sinners, you say there is this *life* between you and God; ah, but, how soon will the white horse of Justice pass the stream, and then flee? Flee as *you* may today, He will surely overtake you! He now is swift to destroy, let it be yours on your knees to make confession of your sin, and say, “I deserve Your wrath, Great King, I deserve Your wrath.” And, if to this you are enabled to add the plea of the precious blood of Christ, the sword of Justice will return into its scabbard, and He will say, “I am just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly.” For Jesus died and inasmuch as Jesus Christ has died, Justice is satisfied on the account of all believers. Go your way, your sins which are many are all forgiven you. “What must I do to be saved?” one asks. This is all you have to do—and this, the Holy Spirit will work in you—“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart.” “What is that?” you say. “I believe Him to be divine; I believe that He is able to save.” That will not save you, there must be something more than that. “What then?” “Believe in Him”—carry out practically your belief that He is able to save by trusting yourself in His hands. To exhibit again an old picture which has often been used—there is a child in a burning house hanging from the upper window. A strong man stands beneath, and offers to catch him, if he will but drop from yonder hot windowsill to which he still clings. “Drop, my child,” he says, “I will catch you.” The child believes the strength of his preserver. That does not save him. He trusts to the strength—he lets go his hold and falls—is caught and is preserved. *That* is faith!

Let go your hold of your good works, your good thoughts, and all else—and trust in Christ! He never did let one soul dash itself to earth yet, that did but fall into His hands. Oh, for grace for every one of us to say in the words of Watts—

“A guilty, weak and helpless worm,
On Christ's kind arms I fall;
He is my strength, and righteousness,
My Jesus, and my all.”

411 INFANT SALVATION – II KINGS 4:26

A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Morning, September 29th, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well.” —
II Kings 4:26

THE SUBJECT of this morning's discourse will be “Infant salvation.” It may not possibly be interesting to all present, but I do not remember to have preached upon this subject to this congregation, and I am anxious, moreover, that the printed series should contain sermons upon the whole range of theology. I think there is no one point which ought to be left out in our ministry, even though it may only yield comfort to a class. Perhaps the larger proportion of this audience have, at some time or other, had to shed the briny tear over the child's little coffin—it may be that through this subject consolation may be afforded to them. This good Shunammite was asked by Gehazi whether it was well with herself. She was mourning over a lost child, and yet she said, “It is well.” She felt that the trial would surely be blessed. “Is it well with your husband?” He was old and stricken in years, and was ripening for death, yet she said, “Yes, it is well.” Then came the question about her child. It was dead at home, and the inquiry would renew her griefs, “Is it well with the child?” Yet she said, “It is well,” perhaps so answering because she had a faith that soon it should be restored to her, and that its temporary absence was

well. Or I think rather because she was persuaded that whatever might have become of its spirit, it was safe in the keeping of God, happy beneath the shadow of His wings. Therefore, not fearing that it was lost, having no suspicion whatever that it was cast away from the place of bliss—for that suspicion would have quite prevented her giving such an answer—she said “Yes, the child is dead, but ‘it is well.’”

Now, let every mother and father here present know assuredly that it is well with the child, if God has taken it away from you in its infant days. You never heard its declaration of faith—it was not capable of such a thing—it was not baptized into the Lord Jesus Christ, not buried with Him in baptism. It was not capable of giving that “answer of a good conscience towards God.” Nevertheless, you may rest assured that it is well with the child, well in a higher and a better sense than it is well with yourselves; well without limitation, well without exception, well infinitely, “well” eternally! Perhaps you will say, “What reasons have we for believing that it is well with the child?” Before I enter upon that, I would make one observation. It has been wickedly, lyingly, and slanderously said of Calvinists, that we believe that some little children perish. Those who make the accusation know that their charge is false. I cannot even dare to hope, though I would wish to do so, that they ignorantly misrepresent us. They wickedly repeat what has been denied a thousand times, what they *know is not true!* In Calvin’s advice to Knox, he interprets the second commandment, “showing mercy unto thousands of them who love Me,” as referring to generations, and hence, he seems to teach that infants who have had pious ancestors, no matter how remotely, dying as infants are saved. This would certainly take in the whole race. As for modern Calvinists, I know of no exception, but we all hope and believe that all persons dying in infancy are elect. Dr. Gill, who has been looked upon in late times as being a very

standard of Calvinism, not to say of ultra-Calvinism, himself never hints for a moment the supposition that any infant has perished. He affirms of it that it is a dark and mysterious subject, but that it is his belief, and he thinks he has Scripture to warrant it, that they who have fallen asleep in infancy have not perished, but have been numbered with the chosen of God, and so have entered into eternal rest. We have never taught the contrary, and when the charge is brought, I repudiate it and say, “*You* may have said so, *we* never did, and you know we never did. If you dare to repeat the slander again, let the lie stand in scarlet on your very cheek if you are capable of a blush.” We have never dreamed of such a thing! With very few and rare exceptions, so rare that I never heard of them except from the lips of slanderers, we have never imagined that infants dying as infants have perished, but we have believed that they enter into the paradise of God!

First then, this morning, I shall endeavor to *explain the way in which we believe infants are saved*. Secondly, *give reasons for so believing*. And then, thirdly, *seek to bring out a practical use of the subject*.

I. First of all, THE WAY IN WHICH WE BELIEVE INFANTS TO BE SAVED.

Some ground the idea of the eternal blessedness of the infant upon its *innocence*. We do no such thing; we believe that the infant fell in the first Adam, “For in Adam all died.” All Adam’s posterity, whether infant or adult, were represented by him—he stood for them all, and when he fell, he fell for them all. There was no exception made at all in the covenant of works made with Adam as to infants dying; and inasmuch as they were included in Adam, though they have not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, they have original guilt. They are “born in sin and steeped in iniquity; in sin do their mothers conceive them.” So says David of himself, and (by

inference) of the whole human race. If they are saved, we believe it is not because of any natural innocence. They enter heaven by the very same way that we do; they are received in the name of Christ! “Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid,” and I do not think nor dream that there is a different foundation for the infant than that which is laid for the adult. And equally is it far from our minds to believe that infants go to heaven through *baptism*—we say, in the first place, that we believe infant sprinkling to be a human and carnal invention, an addition to the Word of God, and therefore, wicked and injurious! When we reflect that it is rendered into something worse than superstition by being accompanied with lies, when children are taught that in their baptism they are made the children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, which is as base a lie as ever was forged in hell or uttered beneath heaven; our spirit sinks at the fearful errors which have crept into the Church through the one little door of infant sprinkling! No; children are not saved because they are baptized, for if so, the Puseyite is quite right in refusing to bury our little children if they die unbaptized! Yes, the barbarian is quite right in driving the parent, as he does to this day, from the churchyard of his own national Church, and telling him that his child may rot above ground, and that it shall not be buried except it is at the dead of night because the superstitious drops have never fallen on its brow! He is right enough if that baptism made the child a Christian, and if that child could not be saved without it. But a thing so revolting to feeling is at once to be eschewed by Christians! The child is saved, if snatched away by death as we are, on another ground than that of rites and ceremonies, and the will of man!

On what ground, then, do we believe the child to be saved? We believe it to be as lost as the rest of mankind, and as truly condemned by the sentence which said, “In the day that you

eat thereof you shall surely die.” It is saved because it is *elect*! In the compass of election in the Lamb’s Book of Life, we believe there shall be found written millions of souls who are only shown on earth, and then stretch their wings for heaven. They are saved, too, because they were *redeemed* by the precious blood of Jesus Christ! He who shed His blood for all His people, bought them with the same price with which He redeemed their parents, and therefore are they saved because Christ was sponsor for them, and suffered in their place. They are saved, again, not without *regeneration*, for, “except a man”—the Text does not mean an adult man, but a *person*, a *being* of the human race—“except a man be born-again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” No doubt, in some mysterious manner, the Spirit of God regenerates the infant soul, and it enters into glory made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light! That this is possible is proved from Scripture instances. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother’s womb. We read of Jeremiah, also, that the same had occurred to him; and of Samuel we find that, while yet a babe, the Lord called him. We believe, therefore, that even before the intellect can work, God, who works not by the will of man, or by blood, but by the mysterious agency of His Holy Spirit, creates the infant soul a new creature in Christ Jesus, and then it enters into the “rest which remains for the people of God.” By election, by redemption, by regeneration, the child enters into glory, by the same door by which every believer in Christ Jesus hopes to enter, and in no other way! If we could not suppose that children could be saved in the same way as adults, if it would be necessary to suppose that God’s justice must be infringed upon, or that His plan of salvation must be altered to suit their cases, then, we would be in doubt. But we can see that with the same appliances, by the same plan, on precisely the same grounds, and through the same agencies, the infant soul

can behold the Savior's face in glory everlasting, and therefore, we are at ease upon the matter!

II. This brings me now to note THE REASONS WHY WE THUS THINK INFANTS ARE SAVED.

First, we ground our conviction very much upon the *goodness of the nature of God*. We say that the opposite doctrine, that some infants perish and are lost, is altogether repugnant to the idea which we have of Him whose name is love! If we had a God whose name was Moloch, if God were an arbitrary tyrant, without benevolence or grace, we could suppose some infants being cast into hell! But our God, who hears the young ravens when they cry, certainly will find no delight in the shrieks and cries of infants cast away from His presence! We read of Him that He is so tender, that He cares for oxen, that He would not have the mouth of the ox muzzled that treads out the corn. No, He cares for the bird upon the nest, and would not have the mother bird killed while sitting upon its nest with its little ones. He made ordinances and commands even for irrational creatures! He finds food for the most loathsome animal, nor does He neglect the worm any more than the angel, and shall we believe with such universal goodness as this, that He would cast away the infant soul? I say it would be clearly contrary to all that we have ever read or ever believed of Him, that our faith would stagger before a revelation which would display a fact so singularly exceptional to the tenor of His other deeds! We have learned to humbly submit our judgments to His will, and we dare not criticize or accuse the Lord of all; we believe Him to be just, let Him do as He may, and therefore, whatever He might reveal, we would accept; but He never has, and I think He never will require of us so desperate a stretch of faith as to see goodness in the eternal misery of an infant cast into hell! You remember when Jonah—petulant, quick-tempered Jonah—would have Nineveh perish, God gave it as the reason

why Nineveh should not be destroyed, that there were in it more than six score thousand infants—persons, He said, who knew not their right hand from their left. If He spared Nineveh that their mortal life might be spared, do you think that their *immortal souls* shall be needlessly cast away? I only put it to your own reason. It is not a case where we need much argument. Would your God cast away an infant? If yours could, I am happy to say he is not the God that I adore!

Again, we think it would be utterly inconsistent with *the known character of our Lord Jesus Christ*. When His disciples put away the little children whom their anxious mothers brought to Him, Jesus said, “Allow the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven,” by which He taught, as John Newton very properly says, that such as these made up a very great part of the kingdom of heaven. And when we consider that upon the best statistics it is calculated that more than one third of the human race dies in infancy, and probably if we take into calculation those districts where infanticide prevails, as in heathen countries such as China and the like, perhaps one half of the population of the world die before they reach adult years—the saying of the Savior derives great force indeed, “Of such is the kingdom of heaven.” If some remind me that the kingdom of heaven means the dispensation of grace on earth, I answer, yes, it does, and it means the same dispensation in heaven, too; for while part of the kingdom of heaven is on earth in the Church, since the Church is always one, that other part of the Church which is above is also the kingdom of heaven. We know this Text is constantly used as a proof of baptism, but in the first place, Christ did not baptize them, for “Jesus Christ baptized not.” In the second place, His disciples did not baptize them, for they withstood their coming, and would have driven them away! Then, if Jesus did not, and His disciple did not, who did? It has

no more to do with baptism than with circumcision! There is not the slightest allusion to baptism in the Text, or in the context; and I can prove the circumcision of infants from it with quite as fair logic as others attempt to prove infant baptism! However, it does prove this, that infants compose a great part of the family of Christ, and that Jesus Christ is known to have had a love and amiableness towards the little ones! When they shouted in the temple, “Hosanna!” did He rebuke them? No. He rejoiced in their boyish shouts. “Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings has God ordained strength,” and does not that Text seem to say that in heaven there shall be “Perfect praise” rendered to God by multitudes of cherubs who were here on earth—your little ones rocked in your bosom—and then suddenly snatched away to heaven? I could not believe it of Jesus, that He would say to little children, “Depart, you accursed, into everlasting fire in hell!” I cannot conceive it possible of Him as the loving and tender one, that when He shall sit to judge all nations, He should put the little ones on the left hand, and should banish them forever from His presence! Could He address them and say to them, “I was hungry, and you gave Me no meat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me no drink, sick, and in prison and you visited Me not? “How *could* they do it? And if the main reason of damnation lies in sins of omission like these, which it was not possible for them to commit for lack of power to perform the duty, how, then, shall He condemn and cast them away?

Furthermore, we think that *the ways of grace*, if we consider them, render it highly improbable, not to say impossible, that an infant soul should be destroyed. What says Scripture? “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” Such a thing as that could not be said of an infant cast away! We know that God is so abundantly gracious that such expressions as the “unsearchable riches of Christ,” “God who is rich in mercy,”

“A God full of compassion,” “The exceeding riches of His grace,” and the like are truly applicable without exaggeration or hyperbole. We know that He is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works and that in grace, He is able to do “exceeding abundantly above what we can ask or even think.” The grace of God has sought out in the world the greatest sinners! It has not passed by the vilest of the vile. He who called himself the chief of sinners was a partaker of the love of Christ. All manner of sin, and of blasphemy have been forgiven unto man. He has been able to save unto the uttermost them who come unto God by Christ, and does it seem consistent with such grace as this, that it should pass by the myriads upon myriads of little ones who wear the image of the earthy Adam, and never stamp upon them the image of the heavenly? I cannot conceive such a thing! He who has tasted, and felt, and handled the grace of God, will, I think, shrink instinctively from any other doctrine than this, that infants dying such, are most assuredly saved!

Once again, one of the strongest inferential arguments is to be found in the fact that Scripture positively states that *the number of saved souls at the last will be very great*. In Revelation, we read of a number that no man can number. The Psalmist speaks of them as numerous as dew drops from the womb of the morning. Many passages give to Abraham, as the father of the faithful, a seed as many as the stars of heaven, or as the sand on the seashore. Christ is to see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied; surely it is not a little that will satisfy Him. The virtue of the precious redemption involves a great host who were redeemed. All Scripture seems to indicate that heaven will not be a narrow world that its population will not be like a handful gleaned out of a vintage, but that Christ shall be glorified by ten thousands times ten thousand whom He has redeemed with His blood. Now, where are they to come from?

How small a part of the map could be called Christian? Look at it. Out of that part which could be called Christian, how small a portion of them would bear the name of believer! How few could be said to have even a nominal attachment to the Church of Christ? Out of this, how many are hypocrites, and know not the truth of God! I do not see it possible, unless indeed the millennium age should soon come, and then far exceed a thousand years! I do not see how it is possible that so vast a number should enter heaven, unless it is on the supposition that infant souls constitute the great majority. It is a sweet belief to my own mind that there will be more saved than lost, for in all things Christ is to have the preeminence, and why not in this? It was the thought of a great divine that perhaps at the last the number of the lost would not bear a greater proportion to the number of the saved, than do the number of criminals in jails to those who are abroad in a properly-conducted state. I hope it may be found to be so. At any rate, it is not my business to be asking, "Lord, are there few that shall be saved?" The gate is strait, but the Lord knows how to bring thousands through it without making it any wider, and we ought not to seek to shut any out by seeking to make it narrower! Oh, I do know that Christ will have the victory, and that as He is followed by streaming hosts, the black prince of hell will never be able to count as many followers in his dreary train as Christ in His resplendent triumph! And if so, we *must* have the children saved; yes, brothers and sisters, if not so, we *must have them*, because we feel they must be numbered with the blessed, and dwell with Christ hereafter!

Now for one or two *incidental matters which occur in Scripture*, which also seem to throw a little light on the subject. You have not forgotten the case of David. His child by Bathsheba was to die as a punishment for the father's offense. David prayed and fasted, and vexed his soul; at last, they tell him the child is dead.

He fasted no more, but he said, “I shall go to him, he shall not return to me.” Now, where did David expect to go? Why, to heaven surely! Then, his child must have been there, for he said, “*I shall go to him.*” I do not hear him say the same of Absalom. He did not stand over his corpse, and say, “I shall go to him;” he had no hope for that rebellious son. Over this *child* it was not—“O my son! Would to God I had died for you!” No, he could let this baby go with perfect confidence, for he said, “I shall go to him.” “I know,” he might have said, “that He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, and when I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I shall fear no evil, for He is with me. I shall go to my child, and in heaven we shall be reunited with each other.” You remember, in those instances which I have already quoted, where children are said to have been sanctified from the womb? It casts this light upon the subject; it shows it not to be impossible that a child should partake of grace while yet a baby. Then you have the passage, “Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings He has perfected praise.” The coming out of Egypt was a type of the redemption of the chosen seed, and you know that in that case the little ones were to go forth; no, not even a hoof was to be left behind. Why not children in the greater deliverance to join in the song of Moses, and of the Lamb? And there is a passage in Ezekiel, for where we have but little, we must pick up even the crumbs, and do as our Master did—gather up the fragments that nothing is lost—there is a passage in Ezekiel, 16th chapter, 21st verse, where God is censuring His people for having given up their little infants to Moloch, having caused them to pass through the fire, and He says of these little ones, “You have slain *My* children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through the fire.” So, then, they were God’s children, those little ones who died in the red-hot arms of Moloch while babies. God calls them, “*My children.*” We

may, therefore, believe concerning all those who have fallen asleep in these early days of life, that Jesus said of them, “These are My children,” and that He now, today, while He leads His sheep unto loving fountains of water, does not forget to carry out His own injunction, “Feed My lambs.” Yes, even today He carries “the lambs in His bosom,” and even before the eternal throne He is not ashamed to say, “Behold I and the *children* whom You have given Me.”

There is another passage in Scripture which I think may be used. In the first chapter of Deuteronomy, there has been a threat pronounced upon the children of Israel in the wilderness, that, with the exception of Caleb and Joshua, they should never see the promised land. Nevertheless, it is added, “Your little ones, which you said should be a prey, and your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in there, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it.” To you, fathers and mothers, who fear not God, who live and die unbelieving, I would say your unbelief cannot shut your children out of heaven, and I bless God for that! While you cannot lay hold on that text which says, “The promise is unto us and our children, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call,” yet, inasmuch as the sin of the generation in the wilderness did not shut the next generation out of Canaan, but they did surely enter in, so the sin of unbelieving parents shall not necessarily be the ruin of their children, but they shall still, through God’s sovereign grace and His overflowing mercy, be made partakers of the rest which He has reserved for His people! Understand that this morning I have not made a distinction between the children of godly and ungodly parents! If they die in infancy, I do not care who is their father, or who their mother—they are saved! I do not even endorse the theory of a good Presbyterian minister who supposes that the children of godly parents will have a better place in heaven than those

who happen to be sprung from ungodly ones. I do not believe in any such thing! I am not certain that there are any degrees in heaven at all, and even if there were, I am not clear that even that would prove our children to have any higher rights than others. All of them without exception, from whosoever loins they may have sprung, will, we believe, not by baptism, not by their parents' faith, but simply as we are all saved through the election of God, through the precious blood of Christ, through the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit, attain to glory and immortality, and wear the image of the heavenly as they have worn the image of the earthy!

III. I now come to make a PRACTICAL USE OF THE DOCTRINE.

First, let it be a *comfort to bereaved parents*. You say it is a heavy cross that you have to carry. Remember, *it is easier to carry a dead cross than a living one*. To have a living cross is indeed a tribulation—to have a child who is rebellious in his childhood, vicious in his youth, debauched in his manhood! Ah, would God that he had died from birth; would God that he had never seen the light! Many a father's hairs have been brought with sorrow to the grave through his living children, but I think never through his dead babies, certainly not if he were a Christian, and were able to take the comfort of the Apostle's words—"We sorrow not as they who are without hope." So you would have your child live? Ah, if you could have drawn aside the veil of destiny, and have seen to what he might have lived! Would you have had him live to ripen for the gallows? Would you have him live to curse his father's God? Would you have him live to make your home wretched; to make you wet your pillow with tears, and send you to your daily work with your hands upon your loins because of sorrow? Such might have been the case. It is not so now, for your little one sings before the throne of God! Do you know from what sorrows

your little one has escaped? You have had enough yourself. It was born of woman, it would have been of few days, and full of trouble as you are. It has escaped those sorrows; do you lament that? Remember, too, your own sins, and the deep sorrow of repentance. Had that child lived, it would have been a sinner, and it would have known the bitterness of conviction of sin. It has escaped that; it rejoices now in the glory of God! Then, would you have it back again? Bereaved parents, could you for a moment see your own offspring above, I think you would very speedily wipe away your tears! There, among the sweet voices which sing the perpetual carol, may be heard the voice of your own child—an angel now, and you the mother of a songster before the throne of God. You might not have murmured had you received the promise that your child would have been elevated to the peerage; it has been elevated higher than that—to the peerage of heaven! It has received the dignity of the immortals; it is robed in better than royal garments; it is richer and more blessed than it could have been if all the crowns of earth could have been put upon its head! Why, then, do you complain? An old poet has penned a verse well fitted for an infant's epitaph—

“Short was my life; the longer is my rest,
God takes those soonest, whom He loves best,
Who's born today, and dies tomorrow,
Loses some hours of joy, but months of sorrow.
Other diseases often come to grieve us,
Death strikes but once, and that stroke does relieve us.”

Your child has had that one stroke, and has been relieved from all these pains, and you may say of it, this much we know, he is supremely blessed, has escaped from sin, and care, and

woe, and with the Savior rests. “Happy the babe,” says Hervey,
“who—

Privileged by faith, a shorter labor, and a lighter weight,
Received but yesterday the gift of breath,
Ordered tomorrow to return to death.”

While another says, looking upward to the skies—

“O blest exchange, O envied lot,
Without a conflict crowned,
Stranger to pain, in pleasure blessed
And without fame, renowned.”

So is it. It is well to fight and win, but to win as fairly without the fight! It is well to sing the song of triumph after we have passed the Red Sea with all its terrors, but to sing the song without the sea is more glorious still! I do not know that I would prefer the lot of a child in heaven myself. I think it is nobler to have borne the storm, and to have struggled against the wind and the rain. I think it will be a subject of congratulation through eternity, for you and me, that we did not come so easy a way to heaven, for it is only a pin’s prick after all, this mortal life! Then there is exceeding great glory hereafter. But yet, I think we may still thank God for those little ones, that they have been spared our sins, and spared our infirmities, and spared our pains, and have entered into the rest above. Thus says the Lord unto you, O Rachel, if you weep for your children, and refuse to be comforted because they are not—“Restrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears, for your work shall be rewarded with the Lord, and they shall come again from the land of the enemy.”

The next and perhaps more useful and profitable inference to be drawn from the text is this—many of you are parents who have children in heaven. Is it not a desirable thing that you should go there, too? And yet, have I not in these galleries and in this area some, perhaps many, who have no hope hereafter? In fact, you have left that which is beyond the grave to be thought of another day, you have given all your time and thoughts to the short, brief, and unsatisfactory pursuits of mortal life! Mother, unconverted mother, from the battlements of heaven your child beckons you to Paradise! Father, ungodly, impenitent father, the little eyes of that one who looked joyously on you, look down upon you now, and the lips which had scarcely learned to call you father, before they were sealed by the silence of death, may be heard as with a still small voice saying to you this morning, “Father, must we be forever divided by the great gulf which no man can pass?” Does not nature itself put a kind of longing in your soul that you may be bound in the bundle of life with your own children? Then stop and think! As you are at present, you cannot hope for that; for your way is sinful, you have forgotten Christ, you have not repented of sin, you have loved the wages of iniquity. I pray you go to your chamber this morning, and think of yourself as being driven from your little ones, banished forever from the presence of God, cast “where their worm dies not, and where their fire is not quenched.” If you will think of these matters, perhaps the heart will begin to move, and the eyes may begin to flow, and then, may the Holy Spirit put before your eyes the cross of the Savior, the Holy Child Jesus! And remember, if you will turn your eye to Him, you shall live—if you believe on Him with all your heart, you shall be with Him where He is—with all those whom the Father gave Him who have gone before! You need not be shut out. Will you sign your own doom, and write your own death warrant? Neglect not this great salvation,

but may the grace of God work with you to make you seek, for you shall find—to make you knock, for the door shall be opened—to make you ask, for he who asks shall receive! O might I take you by the hand—perhaps you have come from a newly-made grave, or left the child at home dead, and God has made me a messenger to you this morning. O might I take you by the hand and say, “We cannot bring him back again, the spirit is gone beyond recall, but you may follow!” Behold the ladder of light before you! The first step upon it is repentance, out of yourself; the next step is faith, into Christ, and when you are there, you are fairly and safely on your way, and before long you shall be received at heaven’s gates by those very little ones who have gone before, that they may come to welcome you when you land upon the eternal shores.

Yet another lesson of instruction, and I will not detain you much longer. What shall we say to parents who have living children? We have spoken of those who are dead—what shall we say of the living? I think I might say, reserve your tears, bereaved parents, for the children who live. You may go to the little grave, you may look upon it and say, “This, my child, is saved. It rests forever beyond all fear of harm.” You may come back to those who are sitting round your table, and you can look from one to the other and say, “These, my children, many of them are unsaved.” Out of God, out of Christ, some of them are just ripening into manhood and into womanhood, and you can plainly see that their heart is like every natural heart—desperately wicked! *There* is subject for weeping for you. I pray you never cease to weep for them until they have ceased to sin; never cease to hope for them until they have ceased to live; never cease to pray for them until you yourself cease to breathe! Carry them before God in the arms of faith, and do not be desponding because they are not what you want them to be. They will yet be won if you have but faith in God! Do not think

that it is hopeless. He who saved *you*, can save *them*. Take them constantly, one by one; to God's mercy seat, and wrestle with Him, and say, "I will not let You go except You bless me." The promise is unto you and to your child, even to as many as the Lord your God shall call. Pray, strive; wrestle, and it shall yet be your happy lot to see your household saved! This was the word which the apostle gave to the jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house." We have had many proofs of it, for in this pool under here I have baptized not only the father and the mother, but in many cases all the children, too, who, one after another, have been brought by grace to put their trust in Jesus! It should be the longing of every parent's heart to see all his offspring Christ's, and all who have sprung from his loins numbered in the host of those who shall sing around the throne of God! We may pray in faith, for we have a promise about it. We may pray in faith, for we have many precedents in Scripture. The God of Abraham is the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, but for this good thing He will be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them. Inquire of Him, plead with Him, go before Him with the power of faith and earnestness, and He will surely hear you!

One word to the entire congregation! A little child was saying the other day—and children will sometimes say strange things—"Papa, I cannot go back again." When he was asked what he meant, he explained that he was here, he had begun his life, and it seemed such a thought to him that he could not cease to be—he could not go back again! You and I may say the same; here we are; we have grown up, we cannot go back again to that childhood in which we once were; we have, therefore, no door of escape there. Good John Bunyan used to wish that he had died when he was a child. Then again, he hoped he might be descended from some Jew, for he had a notion that the Hebrews might be saved. That door God has

closed. Every door is closed to you and me except the one that is just in front of us, and that has the mark of the cross upon it. There is the golden knocker of prayer; do we choose to turn aside from that to find another—a gate of *ceremonies*, or of *blood*, or of *birth*? We shall never enter that way! There is that knocker! By faith, great God, I will lift it now. “I am the chief of sinners; have mercy upon me!” Jesus stands there. “Come in,” He says, “you blessed of the Lord. Why do you stand outside?” He receives me in His arms, washes, clothes, glorifies me when I come to Him. Am I such a fool that I do not knock? Yes, such I am by nature—then, what a fool! O Spirit of God, make me wise to know my danger, and my refuge! And now, sinner, in the name of Him who lives and was dead, and is alive forever more, lay hold upon that knocker, lift it, give it a blow, and let your prayer be, before you leave this sanctuary, “God be merciful to me a sinner!” May the Lord hear and bless, for His name’s sake! Amen.

412 GOD'S FIRST WORDS TO THE FIRST SINNER – GEN. 3:9

**A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Morning, October 6th, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“The Lord God called to Adam, and said unto him, Where
are you?” — Genesis 3:9**

IT WILL BE INTERESTING to the members of this church to know that it was under a sermon delivered by Mr. William Wallin from this very text, that my honored and venerable predecessor, Dr. Gill, was converted to knowledge of the truth of God as it is in Jesus. I looked with some degree of curiosity to his interpretation of this passage. I had half hoped to find there some allusion to his own conversion, but I did not, although I was edified by his clear and methodical comment upon it, to which I am under obligations for suggesting the present discourse. May I hope that as this text has been the means in the hands of God of conferring upon the Church of Christ a man who valiantly defended the truth of God, and was the means of expounding the doctrine of grace with great clearness, that there may be here present today someone at least who like John Gill may hear the word with power, and may receive it in its quickening influence into his soul! No, let us pray that not one alone, but that many may hear the inquiry of God as it rings through the multitude, and while it reaches the ear, may it reach the heart, too, and may some be brought

before God in answer to the question, “Where are you?” and receive the assurance of pardon, and go on their way in peace! It is not necessary that I should, in expounding this text, enter at all into the circumstances which led to the inquiry. Man had sinned against God. Mark the *alienation of heart* which sin causes in the sinner. Adam ought to have sought out his Maker. He should have gone through the garden crying for his God, “My God, my God, I have sinned against You! Where are *You*? Low at Your feet Your creature falls and asks mercy at Your hands. My Father, You have placed me in this lovely Paradise; I have wickedly and willfully eaten of the fruit of which You said that I should not eat of it, since in the day I ate thereof I should surely die. Behold, my Father, I submit to the penalty. I confess Your justice and beseech Your mercy, if mercy can be shown to such a one as I am.” But instead thereof, Adam flees from God! The sinner comes not to God; God comes to him. It is not, “My God, where are You?” But the first cry is the voice of grace, “Sinner where are *you*?” God comes to man; man seeks not his God. Despite all the doctrines which proud free will has manufactured, there has never been found from Adam’s day until now a single instance in which the sinner first sought his God! God must first seek him. The sheep strays of itself, but it never returns to its fold unless sought by the Great Shepherd! It is human to err, it is divine to repent. Man can commit iniquity, but even to know that it *is* iniquity so as to feel the guilt of it, is the *gift* of the grace of God. We have and are nothing but what is vile! Everything which is God-like, everything which aspires towards righteousness and true holiness, comes from the Most High.

And while the text manifestly teaches us the alienation of the human heart from God, so that man shuns his Maker and does not desire fellowship with Him, it reveals, also, *the folly* which sin has caused. Sin made man a fool! He was once in

God's image, wise; now, since the trail of the serpent has passed over his nature, he has become an arrogant fool, for is not he a fool who would cover the nakedness of sin with fig leaves? Is not he indeed mad who would hide from the omniscient Jehovah beneath the spreading branches of trees? Did not Adam know that God fills all space, and dwells everywhere, that from the highest heaven to the deepest hell there is nothing that is hid from His understanding? And yet, so ignorant and stupid is he, that he hopes to escape from God, and make the trees of the garden a covert from the fiery eyes of divine wrath! Ah, how foolish we are! How we repeat the folly of our first parent every day when we seek to hide sin from conscience, and then think it is hidden from God; when we are more afraid of the gaze of man than of the searching of the Eternal One; when because the sin is secret, and has not entrenched upon the laws and customs of society, we go to our beds with the black mark still upon us, being satisfied because *man* does not see it, that therefore *God* does not perceive it! O sin, you have made man ask the question, "Where shall I flee from Your presence?" And you have made him forget that if he ascends to heaven, God is there; if he makes his bed in hell, God is there, and if he says, "Surely the darkness shall cover me," even the night shall be light about him!

But now, the Lord Himself comes forth to Adam, and note how He comes. He comes *walking*. He was in no haste to smite the offender, not flying upon wings of wind, not hurrying with His fiery sword unsheathed, but *walking* in the garden. "*In the cool of the day*"—not in the dead of night when the natural glooms of darkness might have increased the terrors of the criminal; not in the heat of the day, lest he should imagine that God comes in the heat of passion; not in the early morning, as if in haste to slay, but at the close of the day, for God is long-suffering, slow to anger, and of great mercy. He came in the

cool of the evening, when the sun was setting upon Eden's last day of glory, when the dews began to weep for man's misery, when the gentle winds, with breath of mercy, breathed upon the hot cheek of fear! He came when earth was silent, that man might meditate, and when heaven was lighting her evening lamps, that man might have hope in darkness—then and not till then—came forth the offended Father! Adam flees and seeks to avoid that very God whom he had once met with confidence, and with whom he had the sweetest fellowship, talking with Him as a man talks with his friend. And now, hear the voice of God as He cries, "Adam, where are you?" Oh, there were two truths of God in that short sentence! It showed that *Adam was lost*, or God would not have needed to ask him where he was. Until we have lost a thing, we need not inquire about it. But when God said, "Adam, where are you?" it was the voice of a shepherd inquiring for his lost sheep. Or better still, the cry of a loving parent asking for his child that has run away from him, "Where are you?" There are but three words, but they contain the dread doctrine of our lost estate. When *God* asks, "Where are you?" Man must be lost. When God Himself inquires where he is, he must be lost in a more awful sense than you and I have as yet fully known! But then, there was also mercy here, for it showed that God intended to have mercy upon man or else He would have let him remain lost, and would not have said, "Where are you?" Men do not inquire for what they do not value. There was a gospel sermon, I think, in those three divine words as they penetrated the dense parts of the thicket, and reached the tingling ears of the fugitives—"Where are you?" Your God is not willing to lose you; He is come forth to seek you, just as by-and-by He means to come forth in the person of His Son, not only to seek, but to save that which now is lost! "Where are you, Adam?" Oh, had God meant to have destroyed the race, He would have hurled His

thunderbolt at once, and burned the trees, and let the ashes of the sinner lie beneath His angry gaze! He would have rushed in the whirlwind, and in the storm, and tearing up the cedars and the pomegranates by their roots, He would have said, “Here you are, you rebel! Traitor, take your due deserts! Let hell open before you, and be you swallowed up forever!” But no, He loves man; He cares for him, and therefore now inquires where he is in tones of calmness, “Adam, where are you, where are you?”

The question which the Lord asked of Adam may be used in five different ways. We are not sure in what precise sense the Lord intended it—perhaps in all—for there is always in the utterance of the Divine One, a great depth which couches beneath. Our words, if they give one sense, do well; but the Lord knows how to speak so that He shall teach many truths in few words. We give little in much—God gives much in little! Many words and little sense—this is too often the rule of *man's* speech. Few words and much meaning—this is the rule with God. We give gold beaten out into leaf; God gives ingots of gold when He speaks! We use but the filings of gems; God drops pearls from His lips each time He speaks to us! Nor shall we, perhaps, even in eternity, know how divine are God's words—how like Himself, how exceedingly broad, how infinite.

I. We believe that the inquiry of God was intended in an **AROUSING SENSE**—“Adam, where are you?” Sin hampers the conscience; it drugs the mind, so that after sin, man is not so capable of understanding his danger as he would have been without it. Sin is a poison which kills conscience painlessly by mortification. Men die by sin as men die when frozen to death upon the Alps—they die in a sleep; they sleep, and sleep, and sleep, and sleep on, till death closes the scene, and then, in hell they awake in torments! One of the first works of divine grace in a man is to put aside this sleep, to startle him from his

lethargy, to make him open his eyes and discover his danger. One of the first deeds of the good physician is to put sensibility into our flesh. It has become cold, and dead, and mortified. He puts life into it, and then, there is pain; but that very pain has a salutary effect upon us. Now, I think that this question from the Lord was intended to set Adam thinking. “Where are you?” He had perceived in some degree into what a state his sin had brought him, but this question was meant to stir the depths of his spirit, and wake him up to such a sense of danger, that he should labor to escape from the wrath to come. “Adam, where are you?”—look at yourself now, naked, a stranger to your God, dreading the presence of your Maker, miserable, undone. “Adam, where are you?”—with a hard heart, with a rebellious will, fallen, fallen, fallen from your high estate! “Adam, where are you?” Lost! Lost to your God; lost to happiness; lost to peace; lost in time, lost in eternity. *Sinner*, “*where are you?*” O that I might, by the earnest words which I shall now utter, stir up some callous, careless sinner to answer the inquiry for himself! Man, where are you?—where are you this morning? Shall I tell you? You are in a condition in which your very conscience condemns you! How many there are of you who have never repented of sin, have never believed in Christ! I ask you, is your conscience easy?—is it always easy? Are there not some times when the thunder is heard? Are there not seasons when the watchman lights his candle, and searches the secret parts of your soul, and discovers your iniquity? Where are you, then?—for conscience is to God, what the hook is to the fisherman. Conscience, like God’s hook, is in your jaws today, and He has but to draw in the line, and you are in the consuming fire! Though conscience makes you smart, Justice shall be far sterner with you than your poor imperfect conscience. If your heart condemns you, God is greater than your heart, and knows

all things. Your conscience tells you that you are wrong—O how wrong, then, must you be!

But man, do you not know you are a stranger from your God? Many of you seldom think of Him. You can spend days and weeks without a mention of His name, except, perhaps, in some trivial language, as in an oath. You cannot live without a friend, but you can live without your God! You eat, you drink, you are satisfied; the world is enough for you; its transient pleasures satisfy your spirit. If you saw God here, you would flee from Him! You are an enemy to Him! Oh, is this the right case for a creature to be in? Let the question come to you—“Where are you?” Must not that creature be in a very pitiable position who is afraid of his Creator? You were made to glorify Him! You were made to rejoice in His presence, and to delight in His goodness! But it seems you love not the very food which was meant to sustain you. You must be sick—you must be sick, indeed! “Where are you?” Remember, the Almighty God is angry with you. His commandments, like so many guns, are all pointed against you this morning, and it needs only the uplifted finger of the divine One, and they shall soon destroy you and break you in pieces! Would a man be comfortable with his neck upon the block, and the axe gleaming above his head? It is your case today! You are in the position of the courtier at the feast of Dionysius, with the sword over your head suspended by a single hair. Condemned already!! “God is angry with the wicked every day.” “If you turn not, He will whet His sword; He has bent His bow, and made it ready.” Where are you? O God, help the man to see where he is! Open his eyes! Let the question startle him. Let him start in his sleep a little—yes, let him wake and discover where he is—obnoxious to Your wrath, and the object of Your hot displeasure!

“Where are you?” Your life is frail; nothing can be weaker. A spider’s line is a cable compared with the thread of your life.

Dreams are substantial masonry compared with the bubble structure of your being. You are here and you are gone! You sit here today; before another week is past, you may be howling in another world. Oh, where are you, man? Unpardoned, and yet a dying man! Condemned, yet going carelessly towards destruction! Covered with sin, yet speeding to your Judge's dread tribunal! Lost here, yet hurrying on, each moment bearing you on eagle's wings to the place where you shall be eternally lost! How hard it is to bring ourselves to know ourselves! In other matters, if a man is a little sick he seeks his doctor, and would know his position. But here a man says, "Peace, peace. Let well enough alone." If we fear that our personal estates are at all in jeopardy, we have anxious nights and toilsome days; but, oh, our souls—our poor, poor souls—we play with them as if they were worthless counters, or bits of platter which a child might pick up in the streets and cast away! Sinner! Sinner! Sinner! Is your soul so poor a bauble that you can afford to lose it, because you will not break your sleep and stop your pleasurable dreams? Oh, if a brother's heart can move your heart, and if a brother's voice can wake your sleeping eyes, I would say, "What ails you, O sleeper? Arise and call upon your God! Awake! Why do you sleep?! Awake to answer the question, 'Where are you?'—lost, ruined and undone! O sinner where are you?"

II. Now, secondly, the question was meant to **CONVINCE OF SIN**, and so to lead to a confession. Had Adam's heart been in a right state, he would have made a full confession of his sinfulness. "Where are you?" Let us hear the voice of God saying that to us, if today we are out of God, and out of Christ. "Where are you, Adam? I made you in My own image, I made you a little lower than the angels; I made you to have dominion over the works of My hands; I put all things under your feet—the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatever passes

through the depths of the sea. I gave this whole garden of delights to be your home. I honored you with My presence, I thought of your welfare. The moon did not hurt you by night; the sun did not smite you by day. I tempered the winds for you; I clothed the trees with fruit for your nourishment; I made all things minister to your happiness. Where are you? I asked of you but that little thing, that you would not touch one tree which I had reserved for Myself. Where are you? Are you in the room of a thief, a rebel, a traitor? Have you sinned? O Adam, where are you?"

And now; sinner, hear me. "Where are *you*?" To many of you the Lord might say, "I gave you a godly mother who kept over you in your childhood. I gave you a holy father who longed for your conversion. I gave you the gifts of providence—you never wanted for a meal. I clothed your back. I put you in a comfortable position in life. I raised you up from a bed of sickness. I overlooked ten thousand follies. My mercies like a river have flown to you. When you opened your eyes in the morning, it was to look upon My goodness; and till the last moment of the night, I was your helper, and drew the curtains about your defenseless head. I have covered you with My feathers, under My wings have you trusted, and now where are you? Have you not forgotten My commandments, abhorred My person, broken My laws, and rejected My Son? Are you not, at this day, a disbeliever, content to trust to your own works, but not to take the finished righteousness of My beloved Son, the Savior of the world? What have you done for Him who has done so much for you? What are you? Have you not been a cumber-ground—a tree that sucks the soul, but bears no fruit—that drinks in the genial rain of heaven, but yields no grateful fruit? Where are you? Are you not today in the camp of My enemy? Are you not on Satan's side, defying Me, and lifting up the puny arm of your rebellion against the Lord who

made you, and who keeps the breath in your nostrils—in whose hands your life is, and whose are all your ways? Sinner, where are you? After all God's goodness—still a sinner!"

Read the question again thus, "Where are you?" The serpent said you would be a god. You thought to be made exceedingly glorious. Is it so, Adam? Is it so? Where is your boasted knowledge? Where the honors? Where the vast attainments that rebellion would bring to you? Instead of the clothing of angels, you are naked! Instead of glory, you have shame! Instead of preferment, you have disgrace! Adam, where are you? And sinner, where are *you*? Sin said to you, "I will give you pleasure"—you have had it; but what of the pain which followed the pleasure? Sin gave you its cup full of mixed wine; but what of the red eyes, and of the woe? Sin said to you, "I will make you great," but what has it done for you? Drunkard, what has it done for you? Given you rags and poverty! Adulterer, fornicator—what has it done for you? Filled your flesh with leprosy, and your soul with agony! Thief! Cheat! What has it done for you? Disgraced you, and branded you before the eyes of men! Sinner in secret! Polite sinner! What has it done for you? Soured your sweets, and poisoned all your joys! Where are you? Where are you? In every case sin has been a curse. Without exception, rebellion, if it has not yet brought its due deserts, will do so, and sinners shall be filled with their own ways.

And then, to add to the conviction, the Lord asks of Adam, "Where are you," as if He asked him, "How did you get there?" Adam, you came there of yourself. If you had been upright, Eve had not cast you down. Eve 'twas not the serpent with whom the main guilt must lie; had you not given ear, he might have tempted long if you had been deaf. And so today God says to the sinner, "Where are you?" You are where you have brought yourself. That you have sinned is your own fault, and

none else's but your own! Oh, it is hard to make a sinner see that sin is his own property. It is the only thing we have! There is only one thing *we* created, and that is sin, and that is our own. If I permit anything that is evil, I must confess, it is a child that has sprung from my own heart—it has its origin in me! If we talk of the fall, men will throw their sin on father Adam. They speak of the depravity of nature, and then, they think they are to be excused, as if depravity of nature did not prove the man to be desperately bad—as if it were not saying that sin is essentially man's own thing—that he has it in his very bones, and is his blood. If we are sinners, there is no excuse for us whatever. And if we live and die so, the guilt shall lie at our own door, and nowhere else. “Adam, where are you?” You are where you have willfully put yourself, and you remain willfully in the same desperate state of rebellion against God, and of alienation from Him! I would God that something would not only arouse the sinner this morning, but work conviction in him. It is easier to make a man start in his sleep, than to make him rise and burn the loathsome bed on which he slumbered—and this is what the sinner must do—and what he *will do* if God is at work in him! He will wake up and find himself lost; conviction will give him the consciousness that he has destroyed himself, and then he will hate the sins he loved before! He will flee from his false refuges, forsake his joys, and seek to find a lasting salvation where alone it can be found—in the blood of Christ!

III. This brings me to the third way in which we may regard the question of the text. The Lord God called to Adam and said to him, “Where are you?” We may regard this text as the **VOICE OF GOD BEMOANING MAN'S LOST ESTATE.**

Some have even ventured to translate the Hebrew, “Alas for you, alas for you!” It is as if God uttered the words of the prophet, “How can I give you up? How can I utterly destroy

you? How can I set you as Admah? How shall I make you as Zeboim? My repentings are kindled; My heart is moved for you. Where are you, My poor Adam? You did talk with Me, but you have now fled from Me. You were happy once, what are you now? Naked and poor, and miserable; you were once in My image glorious, immortal, blessed—where are you now, poor Adam? My image is marred in you, your own Father's face is taken away, and you have made yourself earthy, sensual, devilish! Where are you now, poor Adam?" Oh, it is amazing to think how the Lord felt for poor Adam! It is taken for granted by all theologians that God can neither feel nor suffer. There is no such thing in the Word of God! If it could be said that God could not do anything, and everything, we would say that He was not omnipotent! But He can do all things, and we have not a God who cannot be moved—we have one who feels, and who describes Himself in human language as having a father's heart, and all the tenderness of a mother's heart. Just as a father cries over a rebellious son, so does the eternal Father say, "Poor Adam, where are you?"

And now, have I here this morning any soul on whom the former part of the text has had some effect? Do you feel yourself to be lost, and do you discern that this lostness is the result of your own willful folly? Do you bemoan yourself? Ah, then, God bemoans you! He is looking down upon you, and He is saying, "Ah, poor drunkard, why will you cling to your cups? Into what misery have they brought you?" He is saying to you who are now weeping over sin, "Ah, poor child, what pain you suffer from your own willful folly!" A father's heart moves; He longs to clasp His Ephraim to His breast. Do not think, sinner, that God is stony-hearted. *You* have a heart of stone, God has not! Do not think that He is slow to move—*you* are slow to move—*He* is not—the hardness is in yourself! If you are straitened anywhere, it is in your own heart, not in

Him! Soul, soul convicted of sin, God loves you, and to prove how He loves you, in the person of His Son He creeps over you, and He cries, “O that you had known, even you in this, your day, the things that make for your peace; but now are they hid from your eyes.” I hear Him saying to you, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you would not!” I pray you, let this mournful wailing voice of the Eternal God come to your ears and move you to repentance! “As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him who dies, but had rather that he would turn unto Me and live.” Oh, does your heart feel ready to burst because of your sin and the misery into which it has brought you? Pray, poor sinner, “I will arise and go unto my Father, and will say to Him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in Your sight, and am no more worthy to be called Your son.” He sees you, sinner! When you are yet a great way off, He sees you—here are *eyes* of mercy! He runs—here are *feet* of mercy! He clasps you—here are *arms* of mercy! He kisses you—here are *lips* of mercy! He says, “Take off his rags”—here are *words* of mercy! He clothes you—here are *deeds* of mercy! Wonders of mercy—all mercy! O did you know what a reception a God of mercy gives to sinners, you would not stay away! As John Bunyan says, when the besieger hangs out the black flag, then those within the walls say they will fight it out. But when he runs up the white flag, and tells them that if they will open the gates he will have mercy upon them, no, he will give a charter to their city, then, says Bunyan, they say, “Fling open the gates,” and they come tumbling over the walls to him in the readiness of their hearts! Soul, let not Satan deceive you by telling you that God is hard, unkind, unwilling to forgive! Try Him, try Him! Just as you are—black with sin, filthy, self-condemned—and if you need anything to make you come to Him, hear again the Lord’s plaintive cry, as

it rings through the trees of Eden, “Adam, poor Adam, My own creature, where, where are you?”

IV. But now I must turn, lest time should fail us, to a fourth way in which, no doubt, this verse was intended. It is an arousing voice, a convincing voice, a bemoaning voice—but, in the fourth place—it is a **SEEKING VOICE**. “Adam, where are you?” I am come to find you, wherever you may be. I will look for you till the eyes of My pity see you. I will follow you till the hands of My mercy reach you, and I will still hold you till I bring you back to Myself, and reconcile you to My heart.

Again, if you have been able to follow me through the three parts of the discourse, I can speak confidently to you. If you have been awakened, if you have been convinced, if you have some longings toward God, then the Lord has come forth to seek you, and to seek you this morning! What a thought it is, that when God comes forth to seek His chosen, He knows where they are, and He never misses them; and though they may have wandered ever so far, yet, it is not too far for Him! If they had gone to the gates of hell, and the gates were half opened to receive them, the Lord would get them even there. If they had so sinned that they had given themselves up, and every Christian living had given them up, too—if Satan had counted upon them, and had made ready to receive them, yet, when God comes forth to seek them, He will find them, and He will have them after all! You, who are lost, perishing sinners, hear the voice of God, for it speaks to you, “Where are you?” for I have come to seek you. “Lord I am in such a place that I cannot do anything for myself.” “Then I have come to seek you, and do all for you.” “Lord, I am in such a place that the law threatens me, and Justice frowns upon me.” “I have come to answer the threats of the law, and to bear all the wrath of Justice!” “But, Lord, I am in such a place that I cannot repent as I would.” “I have come to seek you, and I am exalted on

high to give repentance and remission of sins.” “But, Lord, I cannot believe in You; I cannot believe as I would.” “A bruised reed I will not break, and a smoking flax will I not quench, I have come to *give you faith*.” “But, Lord, I am in such a state that my prayers can never be acceptable.” “I have come to pray *for* you, and then to grant you your desires.” “But, Lord, You do not know what a wretch I am.” “Yes, *I know you*. Though I asked you the question, ‘Where are you?’ it was that *you* might know where you are, for *I* knew well enough!” “But, Lord, I have been the chief of sinners—none can have so aggravated their guilt as I have.” “But wherever you may be, I have come to save you.” “But I am an outcast from society.” “But I have come to gather together the outcasts of Israel.” “Oh, but I have sinned beyond all hope.” “Yes, but I have come to give hope to hopeless sinners.” “Yes, but then, I deserve to be lost.” “Yes, but I have come to magnify the law and make it honorable, and so to give you, your deserts in the person of Christ, and then to give you *My* mercy because of *His* merits.” There is not a sinner here, conscious of his lost estate, who can be in a position out of which he cannot be brought! I will conceive the worst of all the worst, the vilest of all the vile—we will bring up those who have taken high degrees in the devil’s synagogue, and become masters of iniquity—but still, if with tearful eyes they *look alone* to the wounds of Him who shed His blood for sinners; He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him!

Oh, I cannot preach this morning as I would, nor can you perhaps hear as you would wish, but may the Lord speak where I cannot, and may He say unto some despairing sinner here, “Soul, your hour is come. I will pluck you out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay at this day, and at this very hour! I will set your feet upon a rock. I will put a new song into your

mouth, and I will establish your goings.” Blessed, blessed, be the name of the Most High if such may be the case!

V. And now, lastly, we feel sure that this text may be used and *must* be used, in another sense. To those who reject the text as a voice of awakening and conviction; to those who despise it as the voice of mercy bemoaning them, or as the voice of goodness seeking them, it comes in another way. It is the voice of **JUSTICE SUMMONING THEM**. Adam had fled, but God must have him come to His bar. “Where are you, Adam? Come here, man, come here, I must judge you, sin cannot go unpunished! Come; and your guilty spouse with you! Come here; I must put questions to you; I must hear your pleading, and since they will be vain and void, I must pronounce your sentence.” For though there was much of pity in the question, there was something of severity, too. “Adam, Adam, where are you? Come here to be judged.” Today you hear not *that* cry; it is mercifully postponed. You *shall* hear it soon; you shall hear it for the first time like mutterings of thunder, when the storm begins; when sickness casts you on your bed, and death looks through his bony eyes upon you, and touches you with his ghastly hand, and says, “Prepare to meet your God.” You may put off the question today; you will *have* to deal with it when God Himself shall come into closer contact with your nature than He does today. Then shall your bones be as a jelly, and your ribs shall quake, and your very heart shall melt like wax! You shall contend with the pains of sickness or disease; but there shall be a direr pain than these! You shall have to look on death, but death shall not be the most terrible of all your terrors, for you shall see *behind* death the *judgment* and the *doom*! Then you will hear it, when the room is silent and voices of wife and children are hushed; when only the clock is ticking, you shall hear the steps of God coming to you in the eventide of your life, saying to you, “Where are you? Now you shall meet Me.

Gird up your loins! No more invitations of mercy for you! Your day of mercy is gone! No warnings from the minister; now you shall meet *Me*, face to face.” “Where are you?”

Can you brag and boast now, when your nerves have become roads for the hot feet of pain to travel on, and your strength has gone and fled, and you are as a candle ready to die out? Where now are your oaths? Where now your merry-makings and your jests? Where are you now? You may toss and turn, but you will not be able to escape the question! You will try to look back to this life, but you will be compelled to look forward to the life or the death to come! And still will the Lord whisper into your ears, “Where are you? Where are you?” Then shall come the last struggle, when the strong man shall be bowed, when the bright and glittering eyes shall be covered over with film, and the tongue shall cleave to the roof of the mouth, and the hands shall lie with no strength on the bed, and the feet shall no more be able to support the body; when the pulse shall fail, and the clammy death-sweat shall stand upon the brow; and in those last moments, there will still be heard that awful voice, rising with the gathering storm, till it reaches the full grandeur of the awful tempest—“Where are you?” In the Jordan without God; nearing the grave without hope; dying, but no Christ to help you; launching upon eternity, but no hope of eternal salvation! It is over, and the last pang has passed, and the thread is snapped that bound the spirit to the body, and you are gone into another world! But the question follows you—“Where are you?” Your spirit is now awake; it sleeps no more; it is rid of the dull flesh that kept it sullen, placid, stupid, and dead. Now it hears that voice, indeed, and it thrills through and through the spirit, for the soul is brought before its God! “Where are you? Where are you?” cries the quickened conscience; and God answers it, “Depart, you cursed one!” The spirit departs from God, not to hide itself among the trees of

the garden, but to plunge itself into waves of agony! And how many years have passed, and the body, though the soul has been alive and has suffered, has been sleeping in the grave, and the worms have devoured it? But hark, the day of judgment! The day of thunder has arrived! Shrill, above all thunders, sounds the awful trumpet. And after the trumpet comes the voice—"Awake, you dead, and come to judgment!" Amidst that awful tumult is heard the cry, "Where are you?" The angelic messenger has found *your* body, and from the grave your body starts, from underneath the green grass; up it leaps in answer to the question, "Where are you?" and to its horror its ghastly spirit comes back. Its soul, that long has suffered, returns into the resurrection body, and they two, comrades in sin, are now comrades in *judgment!* The cry rings forth once more, and that very ear shall hear it that now listens to me—"Where are you?" Then comes the great white throne, and those very eyes shall see it that now gaze on me! And then comes the commencement of the dread judgment—and that heart shall quail then, which moves not now! Then shall come your own personal trial; and oh, sinner! Sinner! It is not for me to describe your terror! I could not give even the faintest picture of that death-sound, and of the death of your immortal spirit while you hear it—"I was hungry, and you gave Me no meat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me no drink; inasmuch as you did it not unto one of the least of these, My brethren, you did it not to Me; and these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." Oh, earth! Earth! Earth! Hear the word of the Lord! I pray each of you to hear it for yourselves! I have not talked to you of dreams. You know they are realities. And if you know it not now, you shall before long. I do beseech you by the blood of Him who died for sinners—and what stronger argument can I use?—think of the question, "Where are you?" May God show you where you

are! Hear the bemoaning voice of God, as pityingly He weeps over you! Seek His face, for He seeks you; and then you need not dread to hear Him say at the last, “Where are you?” But you will be able to say, “Here am I, and the children You have given me. We have washed our robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; and, Father, here we are, hoping to dwell in Your presence forever and ever.”

Oh, that I could plead with you as a man pleads for his life! Would that these lips of clay were lips of fire, and this tongue no more of flesh, but a live coal taken with the tongs from off the altar! Oh, for words that would burn their way into your souls! O sinner! Sinner! Why will you die? Why will you perish? Man, eternity is an awful thing, and an angry God is a *dreadful thing*! And to be judged and condemned—what tongue can tell the horror? Escape for your life; look not behind you; stay not in all the plain; escape to mount Calvary, lest you be consumed! “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” Trust Him *alone* with your soul; trust Him with it *now*, “and you shall be saved, and your house.”

413 TO DIE OR NOT TO DIE! – II COR. 5:8

**A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Morning, October 13th, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“Willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present
with the Lord.” — II Corinthians 5:8**

I ONCE HEARD two good men holding a dialog with one another. I should not like to have the task of saying which I thought the better man of the two. I believe them both to be sincere followers of the Savior, and both of them, I think, have a good hope through grace. One of them said he would be glad to go to heaven; he wished that his time was come; he did not see anything here worth living for, and he would be only too glad if now the summons should reach him, that he should cross the river and arrive in the promised land. The other brother said he did not feel so; he thought he had many reasons why he would rather just live than die. He thanked God that he had lived to see Christ's Church in prosperity, and it made his heart glad; he would like, he said, to be a sharer of the Church's joy for years to come. Besides, he had those he loved on earth, and he said perhaps it might be a weakness in him, but certainly he could not join in the other brother's aspirations—at least not to the same extent. I stood by; I do not know that I volunteered *then* any very strong words by way of notice of what either of them said, yet I took notes of their conversation, and thinking the matter over, it suggested to me a few thoughts,

which I shall endeavor to present to you tonight. May the topic be interesting, and may you feel your own interest in it!

Now, there was one of the brothers who would *rather not depart but stay*. I will take up that side of the question first, and show when such a desire is wrong and when it is right. The other brother, like Paul, said he would *rather depart*, for he thought it far better. I will take up that side of the question afterwards, and show when that too is wrong, and when that too is right. I think they must both be sifted, and to pronounce a judgment upon either prematurely as right or wrong would be to perpetrate an injustice, and to commit an error.

Sometimes it is wrong for a Christian to say, "I do not want to die—I would rather live." And one of the first cases is *when that Christian has grown worldly*. I think it was Dr. Johnson, who being taken by one of his friends over to his fine house and along the walks of his beautiful garden, observed to him— "Ah, sir, these are the things that make it hard to die." To leave the comforts of life, to go from a nest that is well-feathered, and to stretch our wings into the air; to leave the house which our industry has built, the objects familiar to our senses, the projects that absorb our interest, and above all, the family—I say willingly to leave these is difficult. All these are so many strings tying us down like the ropes which fasten the balloon which would mount if once its cords were cut! But, brothers and sisters, this is wrong in a Christian. What is there in this present world that he should love compared with the world to come? Has Christ taught him to find his solace here? Did Christ come from heaven that we should find a heaven here below? No, rather He has taught us that the enjoyments of this world are not fit meat for the noble spirits which He has re-created! Men must eat angels' food; they cannot live by bread alone. The world was never meant to fill a believer's soul. He may find some contentment in it, for "every creature of God is good,

and is to be received with thanksgiving.” But to set this world in comparison with the next so as to be unwilling to let it go in order to receive the crown of life—this were folly, this were madness, this were wickedness in the godly man. In such a sense as that, the thing is wrong!

And again, when the Christian wishes to stay here, *because he has a secret fear of dying*, it is wrong. Brothers and sisters, I would not speak harshly to those who, “by fear of death are all their lifetime subject to bondage,” but I would speak encouragingly to them. What did Christ come into the world for? He came to deliver those who are subject to this bondage; and did Christ come in vain? No, beloved; then let us shake off these chains; they are unworthy of the men who have a part and lot in Christ Jesus the Redeemer! Afraid to die? Why, you are afraid of a stingless enemy! Afraid of a shadow? No, you are afraid of heaven’s own portals; you are afraid of your Father’s servant whom He sends to bring you to Himself! Be more afraid of living, than of dying, for there are more fears in life than in death. In fact, to the Christian there is no fear in death! “Oh, but,” you say, “the pains and groans of death!” “No,” I say, “they are the pains and groans of *life*.” There are no pains and groans in death! Death occupies but an instant; it is but, as it were, a pin’s prick, and all is over. It is *life* that gives the pains! The sighs, the groans, and the strife are not those of death, but those of life struggling against death, when the strong man will not yield himself. So says one of our poets—

“How deep implanted in the breast of man
The dread of death! I sing its sovereign cure.
Why start at death?—Where is he? Death arrived
Is past; not come or gone; he’s never here.
Before hope, sensation fails; black-boding man
Receives, not suffers, death’s tremendous blow.”

Brothers and sisters, when Jesus Christ died for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification, He “loosed the pains of death.” Our old divines were accustomed to say—“Then there are only a few loose pains for the believer to suffer.” Death seizes not the Christian with the strong grip of an officer of justice. Rather does death beckon the soul away to be present with the Lord! Let those fear to die whose sins lie heavy on their consciences; let those fear to die who have heaped sin upon sin, who have rejected the atonement, have trampled on the blood of sprinkling, have cast behind their backs the invitations of mercy, and live and die in their sins. But you—*you* fear death? You whose sins are forgiven; you who are clothed in Jesus’ righteousness; you to whom death is admission into immortality; you to whom death is but the end of dying, and the beginning of life? You fear death? Why sirs, surely you know not what spirit you are of! Such fear of dying is wrong in the Christian! Let him strive against it, and by getting more grace, let him overcome his dread!

Then again, if the Christian’s fear of dying is *the result of his doubting his interest in Christ*, that is wrong. We have no right to doubt. “He who believes and is baptized shall be saved;” but some read it as though it said, “He who doubts shall be saved.” In this very verse, the apostle says, “We are always confident.” Now, some divines hate the very word “confidence,” and some professors of religion think that a Christian has nothing to do with confidence. And yet, the apostle says, “We are always confident.” And, indeed, the apostle knew what was the proper spirit for a believer; not that he might not be trembling between death and life, between hope and fear, with “if,” and “but,” and “perhaps,” for his only rocks. No, that is not the spirit of a child of God! One would think, to hear some men talk, that the atonement of Christ was a quagmire, a bog, or thin ice which might give way under our feet. But, beloved, it is not so! It is a

rock more lasting than the rocks on which the earth is piled, and more enduring than the solid columns which support heaven's starry roof! Why fear, then? Why doubt? Why tremble? Such pining after life;, such fears of death because we doubt our Savior is disreputable in a Christian! Let us seek to overcome them, that being always confident, we may be willing to depart, which is far better!

One more point I ought not to pass over here, albeit I do not know in which scale to put it—whether to call it right or wrong. When the Christian had rather stay here *because he has a large family dependent upon him*, and he says, “How can I die?” “Ah,” he says, “the apostle Paul had not a house to maintain, and a responsible business to manage for the support of his dependent household. He lived in single blessedness, and when he journeyed he took all his stock-in-trade with him. But if I were to die just now, I would leave my widow without provision, and my children would be all but penniless orphans.” Well now, that is a right consideration. The religion of Christ does not teach us to deny our natural affections, and if any man desires not to provide for his own household, he is worse than a heathen and a publican! But mark, if that care gets to be disturbing care, if it is a distrustful care as to God's providence, then, it is wrong, for many a time has a believer closed his eyes in perfect peace, though he knew that he left his dear ones without a heritage, for he has put God's promise between his lips—“Leave your fatherless children, and let your widow trust in Me.” I think I may tell a story that might aptly illustrate this. Though some are here whom it concerns, the name not transpiring, it can do no hurt. I have heard of a poor laboring man whose children were at that time struggling for their bread, and suddenly the pangs of death came on him. As he lay dying, this was the legacy he left his children—children, mark you, who are this day, many of them, rich, and all of them together

with his widow to her dying day, have been comfortably provided for! He said to his wife, as he was dying—"You will find so many shillings in that box over there"—and you would think he was going to say, "Take care of it, it is the last I have." But no; he said, "I owe just that sum of money to Mrs. So-and-So down in the village. Take it and pay her; it is all I owe in the world, and then I can die content." As a Christian he died and left to his children a better heritage than many a peer of the realm has bestowed, though he has given estates over the acres of which a bird's wing might flag in the attempt to fly! And I say, from that very moment—and there are those here who can bear me witness—from that very moment, that man's family rose in circumstances; from that very instant, they began to rise in respectability and position in life, and they make it their boast that their father left them such a heritage as that! Oh, Christian, you may in the strength of an unwavering faith in God close your eyes in peace! Let not your social position too much disturb you, but while you make all the provision you can, let not your provision ever stint you in your generosity to Christ's cause, or mar the peace with which you go to your deathbed. He who has been with you will also be with your seed! I cannot boast many years of observation—I cannot say as David did—"I have been young and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread," but there are many gray-headed ones who can say that, and set to their seal that God is true!

Having thus brought out what I think the wrong side of the matter, let me now show you when I think it may be right for the believer to say, "I would rather live than die." And that is, first, *when he feels that he has not yet done much for his Master, and a field of labors is just opening before his eyes*. "Oh," he says, "I would not like to go to heaven yet, for I have done so little for Him on earth." As a valiant soldier with the field of battle in view,

he wants to win a victory; the fight is just beginning, and he has not had an opportunity of distinguishing himself. He has been in the rear, and he says to himself, "I need an opportunity of rushing to the front, and winning my new laurels, so that before the battle is over I may be distinguished for serving my country." So many a young Christian may, with a noble ambition, say—"I do not want my part in the battle to be over yet; I had rather stay a little longer, till I have fought the good fight, and finished my course." Christian! Christian! If you say thus, who can blame you? Your desire to remain is commendable indeed. But perhaps we have been long in the field, and we are saying—"I do not want to die yet, because the laborers are few;" oh, let me stay till I see others raised up to preach the gospel that I love! Great Commander of our hosts, let my hand hold Your standard till another hand stronger than mine shall grasp it; let me stand in the fore-front of the battle, till You find someone else to bear the world's condemnation, and tug and toil for souls even in the very fire!" I can quote Carry, and Ward, and Pierre, who when they were laid down with sickness at Serampore, prayed that they might live a little longer, because every godly man in India was then worth a thousand! They seemed to say, "If any would come and take my place, gladly would I go to find repose; but I have to keep this gap, or guard this bulwark. Oh Captain, call me not away, lest Your name be dishonored, and Your enemies get to themselves triumph." If Elisha said, "My Father, my Father, my Father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof"—much more can you conceive the charioteer of God who has long held in the rapid steeds, standing upright in his chariot, as he feels the death-film gathering over his eyes, and he is about in sheer exhaustion to cast down the reins, because he can hold them no longer! You can hear him cry, "Let me just live until I can pass the reins to my successor's hands, and transfer, like Moses, the

guardianship of Israel to a Joshua who shall lead them into the promised land.” In those two cases, and there may be others—it would be allowable for the believer to say, “To abide in the flesh is more honorable for *You*, and therefore, I prefer rather to live than die.”

I now take the second stage of the controversy, and shall try to deal fairly with it. When is it right, and when is it wrong for a believer to wish to go to heaven?

First, it is wrong *when he wants to get there to get away from his work*. Sometimes, when we have got a hard task to do for the Lord, we wish that the rest would come, and we talk almost peevishly of the “rest that remains for the people of God.” There are some lazy spirits who would like an everlasting Sabbath, when they might always sit still and do nothing. That is their notion of heaven—

“There on a green and flowery mount,
Our weary souls shall sit.”

My own constitutional idleness always makes me look forward to heaven as a place of rest, for in everything I do I am obliged to drive myself to do it for the Master's sake. And there are many, I dare say, who suffer from a lethargic and sluggish liver, to whom the thought of heaven as a place of rest is generally the paramount one! Well, now, I do not think that we ought to wish to go to heaven to have done with work. Suppose you were to employ a laborer, and he came to you about ten o'clock in the morning, and said, “Master, it is a very hot day, I wish it were six o'clock at night.” You would say, “Let me see, how many hours have you been at work; here is your money, take it and go; I want none of those laggard fellows about my premises that are always looking for six o'clock!” Or suppose you had another man engaged by the week, and you met him

on Thursday, and he said, “I wish it were Saturday, sir, I wish it were Saturday night.” “Ah,” you would say, “A man who always looks for Saturday night is never worth his master’s keeping; just go on with your work till it is finished, and then, when Saturday night comes it will be all the more welcome to you.” And yet, beloved, you and I have been guilty of that same unworthy listlessness with regard to the things of Christ! We have wanted to get away from the work; it was too hard and too hot for us; so we would even wish to skulk into heaven that we might repose our wearied souls upon the green and flowery mounts. Now, that is wrong! Get up with you, get up with you! “Six days shall you labor and do all that you have to do; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God.” If you murmur at the six days of labor for Christ Jesus in His vineyard, how shall you hope to enjoy with Him the eternal Sabbath that remains for the people of God?

Some, too, wish to get away from this world *because there is some little discouragement that they have met with in laboring for Christ*. Jonah thought he would rather go to Tarshish than to Nineveh. There are many spiritual Jonahs who had rather go to heaven than they would go to their pulpits again, or to the place where they have been taunted, ridiculed, and persecuted. It is the same spirit of disobedience and unbelief. They want to get out of the work, and away from the discouragements of it, and so they say they would like to go home! I knew a man a little while ago—and he who tells the tale knows by experience the truth of it—I knew a man who, thinking of his own responsibility, and of the solemn work which lay upon him, having met with some rough words, and being somewhat cast down, wished to go to heaven. And he has been ashamed of himself ever since, for he thought within himself—what business had he the first time he met with an enemy, to say to his Captain, “Please let me go home.” We have read this last week some excellent stories of

valiant men. There are a few instances that ought perhaps to be told for our encouragement. There was a certain officer in a certain battle, which we need not mention, but which ought to be called forever, “The Battle of the Spurs.” This gentleman, finding there was no chance, rode as quickly as he could to Washington to say it was a mistake. Yes, of course that is what he went for; he was not at all afraid! Of course, he did not return to the battle, because he did not like the look of the campaign, or thought there might be a chance of his being cut down. Perhaps that was not the reason. Perhaps he was a very brave man, and so he showed his back to the enemy, thinking that the back alone of so brave a man would be enough to confuse his foes! Perhaps that was it. And perhaps that may be the reason why you and I want to go to heaven when we get a little uncomfortable. But to tell you the truth, I suspect it was abominable cowardice! And I suspect it is the same with you and with me. We get cowardly and afraid of the world lest its opposition stain our pride; afraid of Satan, whom it is our duty to resist; and tender of the flesh, which it is our great duty to mortify and not to pamper! And withal, we are distrustful of God as our helper! It is then we fretfully say, “Let us go to heaven.” Fancy Martin Luther talking like that! Melancthon did it once, but Martin Luther said, “No, no, Melancthon, you are not going to heaven yet; I will not have it;” and down he went, and prayed while Melancthon said, “Let me die, Luther.” But Luther said, “No, we need you, and you are not to be let off yet, you must stand in the thick of the battle till the fight changes and victory is ours!” Thus, to wish to get away from our appointed place of trial and conflict, because of discouragements, is wrong in the extreme!

And there are some—I would not speak severely but truthfully—some there are who want to go to heaven, *to get away from the Lord's will on earth*. They have had so much pain, that

they would like to be released from it. We cannot, we will not, blame them! If we had the same sufferings, we would have the same desire. But yet, does it not sometimes amount to this, “Father, I see the cup is there, and I know I ought to drink it, but if the cup cannot pass from me, let me pass away from it”? Does it not sometimes amount to this, “This furnace is very hot, Lord; take me out of it to heaven at once”? Does it not come to this, “Lord, You have tried me so sorely; I do not like these trials; I have an objection to Your will, and I should like to be removed from the necessity of enduring it”? Such people never do die, remember, for years afterwards, because the Lord knows they are not fit to die! When we want to die to get away from our pains, we generally keep on living. But when we are able to say, “Well, let it be as He wills. I would be glad to be rid of pain, but I would be content to bear it if it is God’s will,” then patience has had her perfect work, and it often happens that the Lord says, “It is well, My child; your will is My will, and now it is My will that you should be with Me where I am.”

And now, bear with me patiently, while I try to show when such a desire as this is not only undeserving of censure, but truly praiseworthy, exceedingly commendable, and eminently to be desired. Brothers and sisters, if you long to go to heaven *because you are conscious of your daily sins, and want to be rid of them*—if, seeing your perpetual mistakes, transgressions, and iniquities, you are saying—

“Sin, my worst enemy before,
Shall vex my eyes and ears no more;
My inward foes shall all be slain,
Nor Satan break my peace again”—

it is a good desire, for to be perfectly holy is an aspiration worthy of the best of men. You may—I am sure you will—in

the thought that you shall be without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, say, “Jesus, make no tarrying, but quickly take Your servant to Yourself.”

Suppose, again, that *you wish to serve God better than you do*, and you say, “Oh, my Master, I cannot serve You here as I would! I would like to be removed to heaven that I might serve You day and night in Your temple, that I might fly on Your errands, sing Your praises without ceasing, and adore You before Your face with raptures here unknown.” Then, inasmuch as it is a proper thing for the servant of God to desire to be a better servant, and a more faithful and obedient steward, it must be right and proper for him to long to be conformed unto his Master’s image, that he may serve his Master without imperfection! Oh, I think, brothers and sisters, this should be one of the strongest reasons to make us long to get from this world, and gain the promised home!

Again, when you and I have been at the Lord’s Table, or in some service where we have had great enjoyment, we have gone home singing in our hearts—

“Now I have tasted of the grapes,
I sometimes long to go
Where my dear Lord the vineyard keeps,
And all the clusters grow.”

You have had the earnest and you want to have the whole of the redemption money! You have tasted of Eschol’s grapes, and you want to go and live in the land that flows with milk and honey! If you did not want to go, it would be as strange as it would be wicked. Oh Jesus! When we have sipped Your love, we have longed to bathe in it! When we have tasted some of heaven’s dewdrops, we have longed to drink of the river of God that is full of water! When we have come up some of the

lower knolls of the hill, we have panted to climb the mountain's summit, and stand where God dwells in the high places of eternity—

“Hopeless of joy is anything below,
We only long to soar,
The fullness of His love to feel,
And lose His smile no more.
His hand, with all the gentle Power,
The sweet constraint of love,
Has drawn us from this restless world,
And fixed our hearts above.”

Such earnest make us pant for heaven, and it cannot be wrong if such is the case!

Again, *when you have had near fellowship with Christ, when you have seen His face and leaned your head upon His bosom*, it would indeed be a strange thing if you did not wish to be with Him where He is. I would not believe that a woman loved her husband if she never cared for his company. The engaged one has seen her betrothed husband but for a moment, and she wishes to see him again, and longs for the time when they shall never part again. And so the heart that is betrothed to Christ longs to be happy, pants for His embrace, and to sit with Him at the marriage supper. If I were to compare Christ with wine, I would say He is such wine that the more you drink, the more you long to drink. If I compare Him to food—though He stops one hunger, He gives us another! Oh, I think that was a splendid thought of Rutherford's, when, having floated upon the river of Christ's fellowship, he said—“Oh that my ship would sink and founder in the sea! Oh, that it would go down till forty fathoms of His love should reach over the mast head of my highest thoughts! Oh, to be swallowed up in Christ, to

be lost in Him, as the ray is lost in the sun, and the drop in the sea!” If you did not long for this it would be a shame indeed! If you did not long to see His face it would seem as though you had no love for Him, and would never be conformed in His image.

Brothers and sisters, I shall say no more, except to put these few thoughts together. You are a child—he is not a loving child who does not wish to see his father’s face. How some of us used to long for the holidays! We used to make a little almanac, and put down the days, and mark them off one by one. Six weeks before the time we would begin to count how many days there were, and every morning we would say there was one day less before we went home. Either he is a bad child, or he has a bad father, who does not want to go home! Now, we have got a good and blessed Father, and I hope He has made us His true children, and we want to see His face. We long for the time when we shall no longer be under tutors and governors, but shall come Home to enjoy the inheritance! Beloved, we are also laborers. It would be a strange thing if the laborer did not wish to achieve the end of his toils. It were indeed a strange thing if, industrious though he is, he did not prefer the end of his toils to the beginning. It would be contrary to nature, and I think contrary to grace, if the farmer did not long for the harvest, and if he who toils did not desire to receive the reward. We are not only laborers, brothers and sisters, but mariners—mariners who are often tempest-tossed; the sails are torn to shreds; the timbers are creaking; the ship drives along before the blast—who does not want to get into port? Which man among you does not desire to say—“See, the harbor is near; lo, the red lights!” Who among you would not wish to cast anchor now, and say, “I have passed the floods, and now I am come to my desired havens”? Beloved, we are not only

mariners but pilgrims—pilgrims of the weary foot, having here no continuing city. Who does not want to get to his home?—

“Home, home, sweet home!
There’s no place like home!”

Heaven is my home, and there is no place like heaven! No, if you put me in a palace, it is not my home. No, though the world were at my feet, it were not my home. Home! Home! Who will not long for home?

And last, what soldier does not long for victory? He would not shun the fight, but he wishes it were triumphantly over. He does not turn his back, but breasting the foe, he marches on with deadly tramp, with bayonet fixed, keeping the line, till, going over the dead bodies of his enemies, at last he reaches the camp, takes it by storm, and puts the banner of his country where once waved the standard of his foe! What Roman soldier did not anticipate the triumph, brothers and sisters? What Roman cohort did not expect to join in the triumphal procession? What great commander did not aspire to the vote of thanks at the capitol? Let us then pant for home; it is the end of the battle; it is the reward of victory! Let us not long for heaven to escape from the fight, but as a victory that is the result of it! And now, what do you say? Do you say—

“To Jesus, the crown of my hope,
My soul is in haste to be gone?”

Oh, some of you can say it! God grant you your desire. May you find the promised rest when God’s time shall come. And I would say for myself—I would say for you—“Oh, God, in Your own time come quickly; come quickly; come, Lord Jesus!”

How different the feelings of those of you who have no heaven hereafter! To you Death is a chasm, and there is no hope to bridge it! It is dread without a promise; it is despair without an end! Sinner, pray God that you may not die. Think not of dying, for if your troubles are great here, they will be greater hereafter! He who commits suicide to get out of trouble leaps into the gulf to escape from the water; drowns himself to prevent himself from getting wet! He leaps into the fire because he is scorched. Don't do it! Don't do it! He who kills himself goes with his hands red with blood before his Maker, and goes there to his own damnation! But, soul, since you are yet alive, may God teach you to confess your sins, and to seek His mercy; remember it is to be had, for he who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved! Trust Christ with your soul! He is worthy of your confidence! He will keep you, and will "present you faultless before His Father's presence with exceedingly great joy."

414 THE GLORY OF CHRIST – BEHELD! –
JOHN 1:14

A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Morning, October 20th, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.” — John 1:14

I CANNOT REFRAIN from mentioning an incident connected with the perusal of the first chapter of John. I suppose there is not a passage in God’s Word which has not at some time or other been blessed to the conversion of a soul. Even the fifth chapter of Genesis, which is so uninteresting to most readers, because the verses continually end, “And he died,” “And he died,” “And he died,” has been blessed to one, who from the reiteration of the fact that men who lived 900 years nevertheless died, was led to think of his own death. Now, the first chapter of John was the means of the conversion of a celebrated writer, Junius the younger, who did good service in the Church. His father, perceiving him to be an ungodly young man, put in his way, as much as possible, the New Testament, and the following is an extract from Junius’ account of his own life. “My father, who was frequently reading the New Testament, and had long observed with grief the progress I had made in infidelity, put that book in my way in his library in order to attract my attention, if it might please God to bless his

design, though without giving me the least intimation of it. Here, therefore, I unwittingly opened the New Testament thus providentially laid before me. At the very first view, although I was deeply engaged in other thoughts, that grand chapter of the evangelist and apostle presented itself to me—‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God.’ I read part of the chapter, and was so affected that I instantly became struck with the divinity of the argument, and the majesty and authority of the composition, as infinitely surpassing the highest flights of human eloquence. My body shuddered; my mind was in amazement, and I was so agitated the whole day that I scarcely knew who I was. Nor did the agitation cease, but continued, till it was at last soothed by a humble faith in Him who was made flesh and dwelt among us.”

One of the Platonic philosophers who considered all Christian writers to be but barbarians, nevertheless said of the first chapter of John, “This barbarian has comprised more stupendous stuff in three lines, than we have done in all our voluminous discourses.” And, we will, to this day, glory in the power of the Holy Spirit that an unlearned and ignorant man like John, the son of Zebedee the fisherman, should be enabled to write a chapter which excels not only the highest flights of eloquence, but the greatest depths of philosophy!

But now, for the verse before us; I think if you look attentively at it, and if you are in some slender measure acquainted with the original, you will perceive that John here compares Christ to that which was the greatest glory of the Jewish Church. Let me read it, giving another translation—“The Word was made flesh, and tabernacled among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Now, you remember that in the Jewish Church its greatest glory was that God *tabernacled* in its midst; not the tent of Moses,

not the various pavilions of the princes of the 12 tribes, but the humble tabernacle in which God dwelt was the boast of Israel. They had the King Himself in the midst of them, a *present God* in their midst! The tabernacle was a tent to which men went when they would commune with God, and it was the spot to which God came manifestly when He would commune with man. To use Matthew Henry's words, it was the "trysting place" between the Creator and the worshipper. Here they met each other through the slaughter of the bull and the lamb, and there was reconciliation between them. Now, Christ's human flesh was God's tabernacle, and it is in Christ that God meets with man, and in Christ that man has dealings with God! The Jew of old went to God's tent, in the center of the camp, if he would worship—we come to Christ if we would pay our homage. If the Jew would be released from ceremonial uncleanness, after he had performed the rites, he went up to the sanctuary of his God, that he might feel again that there was peace between God and his soul. And we, having been washed in the precious blood of Christ, have access with boldness unto God, even the Father, through Christ, who is *our* tabernacle and the tabernacle *of God* among men.

Now, let us draw the parallel a little further. The greatest *glory* of the tabernacle itself was the most holy place. In the most holy place there stood the ark of the covenant, bearing its golden lid called the mercy seat. Over the mercy seat stood the cherubim, whose wings met each other, and beneath the wings of the cherubim there was a bright light known to the Hebrew believer by the name of the Shekinah. That light represented the presence of God! Immediately above that light there might be seen at night a pillar of fire, and by day a spiral column of cloud rose from it, which no doubt, expanded itself into one vast cloud which covered all the camp, and shielded all the Israelites from the blaze of the broiling sun. The glory of the

tabernacle, I say, was the Shekinah. What does our text say? Jesus Christ was God's tabernacle and, "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father." Jesus is not the tabernacle without the glory; He is not as the temple when the voice was heard with the rushing of winds before the siege of Jerusalem, crying, "Arise, let us go." But, it was a temple in which God Himself dwelt after a special manner; "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."

The apostle however, points to a *surpassing excellence* in Christ the tabernacle, by which He wondrously excels that of the Jewish Church. "Full of grace and truth." The Jewish tabernacle was rather full of law than full of grace. It is true there were in its rites and ceremonies a foreshadowing of grace, but still in repeated sacrifice there was renewed remembrance of sin, and a man had first to be obedient to the law of ceremonies before he could have access to the tabernacle at all; but Christ is full of *grace*—not a little of it, but abundance of it, is treasured up in Him! The tabernacle of old was not full of *truth*, but full of image and shadow, and symbol and picture. But Christ is full of substance; He is not the picture, but the reality; He is not the shadow, but the substance. Herein, O believer, do you rejoice with joy unspeakable, for you come unto Christ, the real tabernacle of God! You come unto Him who is full of the glory of the Father; and you come unto one in whom you have not the representation of a grace which you need, but the grace *itself*; not the shadow of a truth ultimately to be revealed, but that very truth by which your soul is accepted in the sight of God! I put this forth as a matter for you to think over in your retirement. It might have constituted the divisions of the sermon, but as I want more especially to dwell upon the glory of Christ, we leave these observations as a preface, and go more particularly to that part of the subject

where the apostle says, “We beheld His glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

I. In the first place, we have here **A FAVORED PEOPLE**. “We beheld His glory.”

And who are these—the “we” to whom the apostle here refers? They were first of all an *elect company*, for Jesus said, “I know whom I have chosen;” “You have not chosen Me but I have chosen you.” He came unto His own, and His own received Him not; but they who did receive Him are described as men who were “born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” The elect in Christ’s day, though they were but a small remnant, nevertheless did exist! There were a few, else had that generation been as Sodom, and been made like Gomorrah. There were twelves and seventies, and afterwards we read of 3,000 and then of many others who were added to the Church of such as should be saved. In Christ’s own day, however, the lines of manifest election seemed to be but very narrow, for there were but few that followed Him, and of those who followed Him it is said, many from that day went back and walked no more with Him; for His truth had sifted the mere professors, and reduced them but to a slender company who followed the Lamb wherever He went. The “we,” then, who “beheld Christ’s glory,” were a chosen company!

They were also a *called company*, for of many of them we read their special calls. Of John himself we read, that Jesus walked by the sea and “saw other two brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed Him.” Of most of the apostles and immediate attendants upon Christ’s person, we have a record of their divine and special call by Christ’s own voice; and in the case of those respecting

whom there was no record preserved, yet was it, nevertheless, the fact, for He had called them as the shepherd calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. Indeed, in all of us who shall at any time perceive Christ's glory, it must be because He has called us unto this special privilege as the result of His election of us!

These who beheld His glory were also an *illuminated people*; for Christ's glory was not manifest unto the rest of mankind. None of the princes of this world knew Him. The priests who had studied the law could not discover Him; the members of the Sanhedrin, who were under some expectation of His advent, could not perceive Him. In vain was the star in the east! In vain the miraculous appearance of angels to the shepherds; the blind generation would not perceive Him! In vain the opening of blind eyes, and the preaching of the gospel to the poor; in vain the raising of the dead; in vain all those innumerable signs and wonders; they could not perceive His glory! But, of those who did perceive it it may be said, as of Simon Barjona, "Blessed are you, for flesh and blood has not revealed this unto you."

We may say, then, of those who beheld His glory, the favored people that they were chosen of sovereign grace, that they were effectually called by the Holy Spirit, and that they were anointed by the same divine person. And to this day, brothers and sisters, it is the same! None believe in Christ but those who are His sheep; no man comes unto Him except the Father who has sent Him draws them, and none ever perceive Him but those whose eyes are opened by His own healing fingers. Let the question be passed round among us—Do I perceive His glory? Have I seen something of the splendor of God in the humble man of Nazareth? Have I learned to magnify Him in my soul, and have I desired to glorify Him in my life, as my God, my life, my love, my all in all, though once despised and rejected of men? If so, beloved—if we can say

this from our heart, we are favored indeed, and especially favored if we remember how many there are who have never obtained this grace! Not many great men after the flesh see any glory in Christ; they find their glory in the clash of arms, and in garments rolled in blood, but not in Him who is meek and lowly of heart, who gives rest to weary souls. Not many wise men have seen any glory in Christ; they find glory in philosophy; they can see glory in nature, but not in Him who is nobler than God's creation, inasmuch as He is the only perfect one among the sons of men! They say they see something of glory in providence, and yet, fail to perceive anything wonderful in *grace*. Not many wise men are called. Oh, let us be astonished at the sovereignty of God! Let us be filled with gratitude at His compassion! Let us pray that if we know something of the glory, we may know more of it day by day, and may set it forth among the sons of men, that they, too, may by-and-by perceive His glory—"the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

II. But now, secondly, we have spoken of the favored people—let us now spend a minute or two in dwelling upon **THEIR EXALTED PRIVILEGE**. "We *beheld* His glory."

What is this word "Beheld"? It says not we *heard* of His glory, we *read* of it in prophecy, or we listened to it from the lips of others, but we *beheld* His glory! What a privilege was this, which was accorded to the first disciples! Have you not often envied them? To see the man, the very man, in whom God dwelt—to walk with Him as one's companion along His journeys of mercy—to listen to the words as they stream all living from those eloquent lips—to look into His eyes, and mark the depth of love that glistened there—to see His face, even though it was more marred than that of any man. I have often sympathized in that child-like hymn——

“I think when I read that sweet story of old,
When Jesus was here among men,
How He called little children as lambs to His fold,
I should like to have been with them then.
I wish that His hands had been placed on my head,
That His arm had been thrown around me,
And that I might have seen
His kind looks when He said,
‘Let the little ones come unto Me.’”

But, better still to have been with Him—to have leaned this head upon His bosom—to have told Him my griefs, as they did who took up the body of John, and went and told Jesus—to have asked of Him the explanation of difficulties, as they said, “Show us the Father, and it suffices”—to have had one’s faith encouraged by touching His very flesh, as he did of whom it is written that he put his finger into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into His side. But, what are we talking about? All this is carnal; all this is of sight; and the Christian is a nobler being than to live and walk by sight! He lives by *faith*; and to this day, brothers and sisters, there is a sight of Christ which can be had by faith; and therefore we need not murmur because we are denied the privilege of sight. The sight of Christ, it seems, did but little good to those who had it, not even to His disciples, for they were sorry dolts even though He was the Master! It was only when the Spirit came down at Pentecost that they began to *know* Christ, and to *understand* what He had said to them, though He Himself had said it! And truly, ‘tis better to see Christ by faith than it is to see Him by sight, for a sight of Him by faith saves the soul; but we might see Him with the eyes, and yet crucify Him, and be found among the greatest rebels against His government and power!

Now, we say to you, have you *beheld* His glory by faith? Oh, you have all of you *heard* of it. We, the ministers of Christ, have tried Sabbath after Sabbath to lift Him up; and it is such sweet and blessed work that I would love to do it every day! When we have to preach the law, we feel it a hard and toilsome servitude, but to preach *Christ*; O how sweet and blessed the labor is! Happy is the man whose lips are always overflowing with the news of Jesus! Blessed is he whose ministry is full of Christ! He is blessed in his own soul, as well as blessed unto others. You have heard of Him, then, but what of all this? You may hear of His glory and perish in your sins! You have *read* of His glory; this book is in your houses, and you read it, I trust, each day. Thus you have read the story of the Man of Sorrows, and grief's acquaintance. And you know how He ascended on high, leading captivity captive, and forever sits at the right hand of God. But, you may read all this, and yet, it shall be a curse and not a blessing, for you knew Him, and yet, rejected Him! You were among His own and He came unto you, and you received Him not! Oh, to behold His glory! This is soul work, saving work, blessed work, everlasting work—have you any interest in it?

But, you answer, “How can we behold His glory?” Why, faith sees it! Faith looks back to the man who lived and died for us, and sees glory in His shame, honor in His disgraces, riches in His poverty, might in His weakness, triumph in His conflict, and immortality in His death! No, Faith is sometimes assisted by Experience; and Experience sees His glory—it sees the glory of His grace in rolling away all our sins; the preciousness of His blood in giving us reconciliation with the Father; the power of the Spirit in subduing the will; the love of His heart in constantly remembering us upon the throne; and the power of His plea in its perpetual prevalence with God! Experience shows us the glory of Christ in the deep waters

while He puts His arm beneath us and says, “Fear not, you shall not be drowned.” It shows us the glory of Christ in the blazing furnace while the Son of Man treads the glowing coals with His afflicted Israel. Experience shows us the glory of Christ in all the attacks of Satan. While He is our shield He wards off every poisoned arrow; shows us the glory of Christ in helping us to live, and enabling us to die, and by-and-by, it shall show us the glory of Christ in enabling us to rise and take possession of the crown which He has purchased for His children.

And with experience there is another that helps us to behold the glory of Christ, namely, Communion. Beloved, I hope you know what that means—when shut in your chamber with God, and the world shut out, our eyes behold Him and not another; when we can kneel down in the very posture of the poor agonizing victim of Gethsemane, and see by fellowship the sweat of blood as it streams from the pores of His frame; when we can mark Him hounded, hissed, scouted through all the streets of His own city, and taken to Calvary to die! Communion knows something of the bitterness of the cup which He then drank, somewhat of the sharpness of the nails that pierced His hands, and somewhat of the death which was endured when at last He said, “It is finished!” and gave up the ghost. Yes, Communion can show us the glory of Christ even in His shame! And, then it can take to its wings and show us His glory beyond the skies. These eyes have never seen the Savior, but this heart has seen Him! These lips have never kissed His cheek, for that they might do, and I might be a Judas; but my soul has kissed Him, and He has kissed me with the kisses of His mouth, for His love is better than wine! Think me not enthusiastic or fanatical, when I say that the children of God have as near access to Christ today in the spirit, as ever John had after the flesh! There is to this day, a rich enjoyment to be obtained by those who seek it, in having actual fellowship

with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ! Oh, it is a joy worth worlds! Worldling, if you have ever known the sweetness of this bread, you would never eat your own ashes again! O pleasures of the world! You would cease to tempt us, if you knew how much more sweet are the pleasures of His face! O thunders of this world! You would cease your attempts to frighten us if you knew the sweet satisfaction and solace which we find in Him, when everything is bitter and disconsolate abroad! Yes, we have beheld His glory, just as surely as if we had seen it with our eyes; as certainly as if we had heard with our ears the acclamations of the glorified, and taken our seat with them at the foot of His throne, or with them, had veiled our faces with wings and cried, “Holy holy, holy, Lord God omnipotent!” Just as truly, though not so fully, we have beheld His glory—the glory of the only-begotten of the Father—full of grace and truth!

III. Thirdly, we have in the text A MOST BLESSED VISION.

We have had the favored persons, their exalted privilege, and now we have their blessed vision. We have beheld His glory. Let us dwell upon the thought of His glory for a while. My brothers and sisters, what a glory have we beheld by faith! By faith, in the first place, we have beheld the glory of His *complex person*. We have known and believed that He is the everlasting Word, the veritable Son of the Father; we have beheld Him by faith as dwelling with the Father before the world was; the beloved of His Father’s soul; we have seen Him, and we have marked that His goings-forth are of old, even from everlasting! We have seen Him weighing the clouds, measuring the channels of the great deep, planning the heavens, and meting out the sea; we have seen Him with the line and with the plummet, making all things according to His wisdom, and the purpose of the counsel of His will, for “without Him was not anything made that was made.” We have seen Him as God,

seated upon the throne of His Father, and we have believed that the sea roars only as He bids it, that the earth, with all the creatures that are therein, obeys His glorious will. Lo, in His hands today the keys of heaven, and death, and hell! We have had no doubts whatever as to His divinity, for we have seen and known that He is “very God of very God.” “God over all, blessed forever. Amen.”

We have seen him, too, *as man*. We have perceived that He is of the substance of His mother, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh; man in all infirmities, but not man in any guiltiness of His own; man weak, suffering, hungry, thirsty, dying, but without spot or wrinkle—pure, the immaculate Lamb of God! We have beheld Him in the glory of this complex person—not God deteriorated to man, not man deified to God, but God, very God and very man; God in all that is God-like, man in all that is man-like; and we have adored Him as such. We have seen in Him the luster of a beauty which far outshines all that earth can present us, or all that heaven can offer. Who have we on earth but Jesus? Who is there in heaven that we can desire besides Him?

Next, we have beheld His glory, not merely in His person, but in the *motive for which He undertook His great work*. That motive was love, love which could have no self-interest to be an alloy, love to worthless creatures, love to those who could never repay His love, love to rebels, love to men who crucified the Lord of glory; and we have said as we have seen this love sparkling like a jewel in a black setting, lying in the heart of the poor, injured, poverty-stricken, houseless, comfortless Man of Nazareth, “There is a glory here in this love that is never to be found elsewhere.”

Then, we have beheld the glory of His *self-sacrifice*. We have looked upon Him giving up everything for us, renouncing His crown and specter, laying aside His royal robes and splendor,

leaving His Father's house, and palaces, and honor; becoming man, no, a poor man, a despised afflicted man; no, becoming obedient to death, even the death of the cross! We have read history through, but, we never saw a self-sacrifice that could equal His. In Him selfishness never lived, and therefore, never needed to be kept in check. He was not His own; His whole history could be written in this—"He saved others, Himself he cannot save." Glorious Christ, in this while You were rejected of men, we have beheld Your glory!

We have beheld, moreover, the glory of *His endurance*. He is tempted in every point, yet fails in none. The world's glory lies at His feet; He chooses rather our salvation than the glories of earth! He counted the reproach that He should bear for us greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt! We see Him mocked, yet never reviling; spit upon, yet never spitting back again even so much as a word of venom. We see Him despised, yet never attempting to clear Himself; accused, yet silent before the judgment seat; so giving up Himself that He can bear all things, whatever they may be. Many waters could not quench His love; neither could the floods drown it. Though all the substance of the world's house were offered Him that He might renounce His love, yet did He utterly despise the world. Who was ever such a martyr as the Savior? Who endured as He did? Who bore such contradiction of sinners against Himself? Great God, O Jesus—for such You are—Great God, there is none like You in the omnipotence of Your endurance! We have seen Your glory, even when You did tabernacle among men.

And, we have seen His glory also in His great and blessed *perseverance* even to the end. Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them to the end—having undertaken, He went through with it; He never paused till He could say, "It is finished." Then He gave up the ghost, but not till then. Now, today behold His perseverance! For Zion's sake He does not

rest, and for Jerusalem's sake He never holds His peace, day nor night until God shall be pleased to make her glory come forth as the brightness, and her righteousness as a lamp that burns. On, on, on, neither to the right nor to the left turning for a moment, without pause, without making a moment's question, onwards to His destined work He speeds, and never does He cease till He can say to His Father, "I have finished the work that You gave Me to do."

And then, not to keep you too long even upon such a subject as this, we have beheld His glory in His *final triumph*. Yes, brothers and sisters, by faith we have seen in the very moment when the sun was darkened, and when the earth was shaken, and the rocks torn asunder, we have seen Christ darkening the world's glories. We have seen Him rending rocky hearts, and bidding the dead arise. We have seen Him in the very instant when He gave up the ghost leaping from the cross, pursuing with thunderbolts the prince of hell, and driving him to darker shades below! We have seen Him grasping at last the tyrant in His hands, and chaining Him to His chariot wheel. Our faith has beheld Him riding up the everlasting hills, leading captivity captive; we have seen the gates flung wide open while angels said, "Lift up your heads, O you gates, and be you lift up, you everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." We have joined by faith the triumph and have swelled the train; we have heard the acclamation of the spirits of the just made perfect; we have heard above all the voice of God, "Well done, You have finished your Father's will." We have seen Him ascend in august majesty the throne which is His resting place, and we have seen Him sit down at the right hand of the Father, while from heaven and earth and even hell, there went up one prolonged note of praise, "Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah! The Lord God omnipotent reigns." No, our faith has gone beyond the mere matters of the past. We have beheld His glory,

we have seen Him as one by one His sheep are brought, and His prayer is heard, “Father, I will that they also whom You have given Me be with Me where I am.” We have seen Him going forth day after day in the chariot of salvation, scattering with both His hands His mercies among the poverty-stricken sons of men, and we have cried unto Him, “Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O You most mighty.” Often has our prayer been, “Come forth, O Jesus. Heaven obeys You, earth shakes at Your presence, hell trembles at You, devils are dismayed. Come forth, put Your arrow to the string, and lift up Your glittering spear. Who, who shall stay Your course, or stand in Your presence? Like chaff before the wind, so shall they be driven, and as stubble before the flame, so shall they be utterly consumed.” We have been helped to fly even to the great end of all things, and by faith, have seen His second advent! We have beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father. We have seen Him come—

“But not the same
As once in lowliness He came —
A silent Lamb before His foes,
A weary man, and full of woes.”

We have seen Him come —

“With dreadful form,
With rainbow-wreath, and robes of storm!
On cherub wings, and wings of wind,
Appointed Judge of all mankind!”

We have beheld His millennial reign. We have marked the dwellers in the wilderness blowing before Him; the kings of Seba and Sheba offering their gifts; we have heard the universal

song from the dwellers in the rocks and the islands of the sea; we have seen the idyllic age of love, when no strife shall vex Messiah's reign. When they shall—

“Hang the useless helmet high
And study war no more.”

And then, we have seen the judgment. We have beheld the reeling earth unable to bear the splendor of His triumph; we have heard the wailings of His enemies; we have seen them melt as wax before the flame, utterly consumed like the fat of rams upon His altar. We have at last, by faith, seen the end, when He shall give up the kingdom to God, even our Father; we have heard, I say, the last word of the whole history in the shout of complete victory—

“Lo, Jehovah's banners furled
Sheathed His sword—He speaks—'tis done!
And the kingdoms of this world
Are the kingdoms of His Son!
Then the end—beneath His rod,
Man's last enemy shall fall;
Hallelujah! Christ in God,
God in Christ is all in all.”

IV. Have patience with me while I now conclude. In the fourth place, the text reminds us of **THE TESTIMONY WHICH WE WHO HAVE SEEN HIS GLORY ARE SURE TO BEAR.**

We bear our testimony that He is *“The only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”* Brothers and sisters, instead of preaching, let me bear my testimony; my testimony of what I have seen; what my own ears have heard, and my own heart has tasted—that Christ *is the only-begotten of the Father.* He is

divine to me, if He is only human to the entire world besides! He has done that for me which none but a God could do. He has turned my stubborn will, melted a heart of stone, broken a chain of steel, opened the gates of brass, and snapped the bars of iron. He has turned my mourning into laughter, and my desolation into joy! He has led my captivity captive, made my heart rejoice with unspeakable joy and full of glory. Let others think as they will of Him, to me He must be the only-begotten of the Father— blessed be His name!—

“O that I could now adore Him,
Like the heavenly host above,
Who forever bow before Him,
And unceasing sing His love.
Happy songsters!
When shall I your chorus join?”

Your name is precious even as ointment poured forth! You are indeed my Lord and my God, as certainly as ever You were the God of Thomas! Like Paul, my soul shall say, “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”

Again, I bear my testimony that He is *full of grace*. Ah, had He not been, I would never have beheld His glory! I was full of sin to overflowing. I was condemned already, because I believed not upon Him. He drew me when I wanted not to come, and though I struggled hard, He continued still to draw; and when at last I came all trembling like a condemned culprit to His mercy seat, He said, “Your sins which are many are all forgiven you; be of good cheer.” “He took me up out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay. He has set my feet upon a rock, and put a new song into my mouth, and established my goings.” Let others despise Him; but I bear witness that He is

full of grace! Oh, I would that some poor sinner here who is full of sin would remember that Christ is full of grace—I would that you, poor despairing one—you who have given yourself up as a lost soul, would remember that—

“Plenteous grace with Him is found,
Grace to pardon all your sin!
May the healing streams abound,
Make and keep you pure within!”

Finally, I bear my witness, that as He is full of grace, He is *full of truth*. True have His promises been; not one has failed. I have often doubted Him, for that I blush; He has never failed me, in this I must rejoice! His promises have been yes and amen. I do but speak the testimony of every believer in Christ, though I put it thus personally to make it the more forcible. I bear witness that never servant had such a Master as I have; never brother had such a kinsman as He has been to me; never spouse had such a husband as Christ has been to my soul; never sinner a better Savior; never soldier a better captain; never mourner a better comforter than Christ has been to my spirit. I need none besides Him! In life He is my life, and in death He shall be the death of death! In poverty Christ is our riches; in sickness He makes our bed; in darkness He is our Star; and in brightness He is our Sun. He is the Manna of the camp in the wilderness, and He shall be the new corn of the host when they come to Canaan! He is the rock that follows them today; He is the rock on which they shall rest, and within which they shall dwell forever—

“All hail Immanuel, all divine,
In You Your Father's glories shine!
You brightest, sweetest, fairest one,

That eyes have seen or angels known.
O may I live to reach the place
Where He unveils His lovely face.
Where all His beauties saints behold,
And sing His name to harps of gold!”

So be it, Lord, by Your grace. Amen.

415 THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST – RECEIVED! – JOHN 1:16

**A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Evening, October 20th, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

“And of His fullness we have all received.” — John 1:16

THE TEXT INFORMS US that there is fullness in Christ. There is a fullness of essential Deity, for “in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead.” There is a fullness of perfect manhood, for in Him bodily, that Godhead was revealed. Partaker of flesh and blood, made in all things like unto His brethren, there was nothing lacking that was necessary to the perfection of humankind in Him. There is a fullness of atoning efficacy in His blood, for “the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.” There is a fullness of justifying righteousness in His life, for “There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.” There is a fullness of divine providence in His plea, for “He is able to save to the uttermost them who come unto God by Him; seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.” There is a fullness of victory in His death, for “through death He destroyed him that had the power of death that is the devil.” There is a fullness of efficacy in His resurrection from the dead, for by it “We are begotten again to a lively hope.” There is a fullness of triumph in His ascension, for “When He ascended up on high He led

captivity captive, and received gifts for men.” There is a fullness of unspeakable blessings, unknown; a fullness of grace to pardon, of grace to regenerate, of grace to sanctify, of grace to preserve, and of grace to perfect. There is fullness at all times; fullness by day and a fullness by night; a fullness of comfort in affliction, a fullness of guidance in prosperity, a fullness of every divine attribute, of wisdom, of power, of love; a fullness which it were impossible to survey, much less to explore! There is everything summed up in a total; “The gathering together of all things in One” in Christ Jesus. “It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell.” In vain we strive to recount the holy wonder; it were a theme which would exhaust an angel’s tongue to tell—the fullness which resides in Jesus our head, and always abides to answer our need.

And now, what shall we say to these things? “Of His fullness we have all received.” The text seems to me to suggest four reflections. First, *an appeal to our gratitude*, “Glory be to Christ, for of His fullness have we all received.” Secondly, *a notion of character*, “Thus may you know the people of God, for of His fullness have they all received.” Thirdly, *a sentence of admonition to believers*, “Be wise, oh you people of God, be grateful, and be humble, for it is of His fullness you have received.” And in the last place here is to the sinner *a word of sweet encouragement*, “Come, all the saints invite you, for of His fullness have they all received.”

I. To begin with the first, the text compels us to say, “**GLORY BE UNTO CHRIST FOR HIS FULLNESS**, for of it have all the saints received.”

Appeal to those who died before the flood; ask those who trod in the steps of Enoch; go forward to Noah, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; put the question to David and Samuel! Come on through the prophets, to Isaiah and Jeremy—ask them all, “From where came your faith; where your power to suffer, and

your strength to conquer?” With united breath they answer, “Of His fullness who as yet had not come in the flesh, we received by faith.” Ask the saints in later times. I summon you, oh you bright apostles of the Lamb, “From where came your noble testimony and your unwavering constancy?” They reply with the voice of John, their leader, “Of His fullness we have all received.” Appeal to the martyrs on their racks, on their blood-stained gallows, on their stakes and glowing fires; in their dungeons and damp dying places—ask the tenants of ten thousand graves, “From where came your triumph?” And they reply at once, “We have overcome through the blood of the Lamb.” “Of His fullness we have all received.” You could go through the list of the Reformers; you could ask Luther and Calvin, and Zwingli and Melancthon, and Wycliffe and Huss, and Jerome and Knox; and there is not one of them who will dare to say that he had anything of his own! You could turn over the list of the great preachers, and summoning them one by one, you could say to Augustine, to Chrysostom, to Bernard, and to those in later days, such as Latimer, Tindal, and Hooper, and to the men who still later, with Whitefield, and with Wesley preached the Word, “From where came your boldness in confession; from where your strength to bear the slander of the age, and to be the butt of human scorn, and yet never to flinch, much less to withdraw your testimony?” And they all reply, “Of His fullness we have all received.” Brothers and sisters, what fullness this must be, when you think that a multitude which no man can number, a company beyond all human count have all received Him! And there is not one of them who has received too little; they are all, as Rutherford has it, “drowned debtors to His grace;” or, as we put it, “over head and ears” in debt to Him! They are so indebted that they will never know how much they owe, but they feel that an eternal song will not be too long to utter their grateful praise! Fullness, indeed, must

there be in Him when all these streams have been continually flowing, and yet, He is not dry; when all these mouths have been filled, and yet, the granary is not empty; when all these thirsty ones have had their drink, and yet, the well springs up as free, as rich, as full as ever!

But you must note again, to the praise of Christ, not only did they all receive of His fullness, but they all received all that they had! They had not, any of them, a part of their own. No apostle could say, “So far I am a debtor, but here I stand and claim the honor for myself.” With sin begins and ends the whole story of man; but where good appears, there grace begins; or, rather, the grace began before the good! For every good desire, for every holy thought, for every well-spoken word, for every deed of daring, for every act of self-sacrifice, let Christ be honored, for everything has come of Him! If there is any virtue, any praise, *anything* that is lovely or of good report, go and cast it at His feet, for from Him it came! He sowed the seed out of which it grew; He created the nature out of which these good things sprung. Oh, what must the fullness be from which all the saints received all that they have! But there is another way of estimating the fullness, by remembering that, albeit, all the saints have received all these things, yet it remains undiminished—still a fullness! There is not a drop less in Christ, though oceans have been taken away! There is not a spark less in that furnace, though many fires have been kindled therefrom. There is not a farthing less in that treasury, though millions of souls have been enriched. There is not a grain less in that granary, nor is there a grain less even when the whole world shall be sown, and all these sheaves shall come to the harvest! It is always blessed for the child of God to know that in Christ there is enough for all the saints, enough for each, enough forevermore; and when they have had all and everything that they can have, still there is as much left as when they began! I

noticed in Venice at the wells, that the people came to them early in the morning because very soon afterward they were almost dry, and it needed some two or three hours for the well to spring up again. Ah, but it is never so with Christ! Come early in the morning, O you thousands of seekers, and that well is full; come at hot noon tide, O you thirsty ones, and the well is full; come when the sun is going down, you that are wearied with your day of toil, for the well is always full! Ah, come at midnight, you whose sun is set, who are lost in the darkness of despair, for still you shall find that the well is full; never exhausted! No, never diminished; always springing up, always overflowing. As long as there shall be souls found who need to drink of His fullness, the supply shall be abundant!

Though there are many things to say on each division of my subject, you must excuse me if I say but little. You must take the text home and think of it for yourselves. Spirits around the throne, I hear you sing tonight, “Of His fullness we have all received.” Saints on earth, speeding your way to the eternal triumphs, join their song and say, “Of His fullness we have all received.” Let no voice be silent, let no tongue be dumb, but let every soul say, “Of His fullness, too, have I received, and glory be unto His name!”

II. Now for our second point. The text also teaches us **HOW TO KNOW WHO IS THE CHRISTIAN**, for it says, “Of His fullness we have all received.”

There are some in this world who obtain their religion from their fathers and mothers. They go to church, or perhaps to chapel, because there is a family pew there, and all their family used to go. They speak about “our church,” and “our denomination,” as though their grandfather had left his religion in his last will and testament for a legacy to them! Let such know that religion is not to be inherited! It is a personal matter. No man can stand sponsor for another. One of the most

ridiculous and pestilent of human inventions is the idea of making one man stand representative for another, or an adult for a child! Everyone must appear before God, and be judged for ourselves. Jesus Christ is the only Surety. Verily, we should have enough to do to answer for ourselves at the last, without attempting to make a reply for other people! To our own Master we must stand or fall. We have a divinely appointed Substitute. Therefore, we shall all *stand* around the judgment seat of Christ. But you have received your grace, you say, from your parents. If you have got it anywhere but from Christ, then please remember, you do *not* belong to the family of Christ! Others there are who have a religion of their own; they have got it by good works. They have always acted uprightly; they have shut their shops on Sunday; they do not cheat—at least not often, not more than other people; they speak the truth, and they endeavor to do their best. They would not mind helping a poor neighbor; or if they are in richer circumstances, their guinea is always ready whenever the subscription list is placed before them! And they say, “Well, if it does not go well with me, it will be hard with a great many people.” That is quite correct; indeed it will go very hard with a great many people! But this religion of theirs is of their own making. Then, sometimes when men get rich, they think they will, as it were, put the finest fruit on the top of the bushel, and they leave a donation to some society. A very good plan, indeed, by the way, but a pitiful thing if it is left with the view of getting merit by it! So now they say, “It will all be well; there will be two or three alms-houses built. I have been a good fellow while I have lived, and it will surely be well with me at the end.” You do *not* belong to the same company as the saints who have gone before! You have evidently nothing to do with the apostle John—for *his fullness came from Christ!* It is quite apparent you can never share his heaven; you can never enjoy his bliss; you can never enter

into his rest. What he had, he owed to divine grace; but it seems what you have, is of your own earning. Your robes are of your own spinning, your fire of your own kindling, your coin of your own minting, your merits of your own merchandise. Oh, be not deceived, these things will fail you at the last, and you will find them as a dream when one awakes! All your fine righteousness shall disappear as a shadow when your conscience is awakened upon your dying bed! But others have a better sort of religion than this. They do not believe the Calvinistic doctrine, that without Christ we can do nothing. They acknowledge that without Him we cannot do *much*; still they pretend that with Him they can do just a little! If we cannot save ourselves, yet we can believe in our own strength! So they take the first step. They begin the good work in *themselves*. And then their divines teach them that they must persevere—yes, if they do not, if they will not do their part, God will leave them! The grace of God is dependent upon *their* good behavior; so they try to behave themselves to keep the grace of God. They “use the grace of God” as they call it. They try to hold on to the end of themselves.

And what does it all come to? To such I say, it is very manifest that you *do not* belong to those old-fashioned saints who lived in the Bible times, for all they had they received from Christ! They did not get the beginning from themselves—He was Alpha; they did not get the ending—He was Omega! They did not get anything from self! They sought and they found Christ for all. If you had asked an old saint his opinion about salvation, he would have replied in the language of Jonah, “Salvation is of the Lord.” Free will doctrines, creature power, and human strength, were unknown in Bible times! They were the invention of one Pelagius; they were newly vamped and made a little tidy by Van Harmin, called Arminius. There are some who to this day have adopted “these old shoes and

clouded upon their feet, and old garments upon them, and all the bread of their provision is dry and moldy,” and they appear like Gibeonites in the Lord’s hosts. I do not say but what many of them shall be saved, but they shall be hewers of wood and drawers of water in the midst of the congregation in their days, for they never can come into the liberty wherewith Christ makes us free while they believe those adulterated doctrines, those traditions of men, instead of the doctrine and revelation of Christ Jesus the Lord!

Now, let us try to find out the true Christian—the enlightened Christian. The true Christian has all from Christ; the heaven-taught Christian feels it is so. You remember that the apostle Paul said of himself that he was the chief of sinners. A little while before he says he was the least of all the saints, and last of all he says, “Though I am nothing.” John Newton says, “Young Christians think themselves little; growing Christians think themselves nothing; full-grown Christians think themselves less than nothing.” So as we grow up, we grow down; as Christ increases, we must decrease; as He is glorified, the flesh gets dishonored in our esteem! Now, what do you say, brothers and sisters? Did you receive all the grace you have from Christ? Is He all-in-all to you? Are you resting wholly and simply and only on Him? Can you say as poor Jack did in that story I once told you—

“I’m a poor sinner and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my all-in-all!”

Have you learned to depend on Him for all things, and on self for nothing? Have you seen the rottenness and emptiness of all human merit? Have you learned the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of all human trust? If so, rejoice, for you belong to that company who can say, “Of His fullness we have

all received.” Sometimes the devil will say to us, “Well, you do a great deal in the cause of Christ; you do not have a moment’s rest from the moment you wake in the morning to the time you go to sleep at night; always thinking of something for Christ and doing something for Him.” And, then, proud flesh says, “Ah, you have labored more abundantly than they all!” No, no, my brothers and sisters! When we come to look upon all our works, those of us who have toiled the most for Christ, I am sure we cannot find any satisfaction in them. In reviewing all that I have attempted to do, I can only say, as far as my own personal experience goes, I am as heartily sick of my own righteousness as I am of my sins! I feel as much reason to have God’s grace over the best deeds as over the worst. I often lie down in the very dust of self-abasement, feeling that I have not anything—no, not a rag of my own—no, not a grain of merit, not an atom whereon I can trust! As abject a sinner as there is out of hell if I look into myself, it is my only satisfaction that I am enabled to look to Christ and to Christ alone! All that is of nature’s spinning must be unraveled; all that is of nature’s manufacture must be broken in pieces! We must unhoof the horses and burn the chariots of human strength in the fire, for thus says the Spirit, “I will stain the pride of all glory, and bring into contempt all the excellent of the earth.” “Yes, doubtless, and we count all things but loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.” Here is our struggle—“That we may win Christ and be found in Him, not having our own righteousness which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith.”

III. Thirdly, we draw from the text **A SENTENCE OF ADMONITION TO THE BELIEVER.** “Of His fullness we have all received.”

Should not the believer be of all men the most *humble*? I have heard sometimes of a man or woman being a Christian,

and yet being proud. Now, a proud Christian is a singular contradiction! Yet you do know some, you would not say they were not godly people; but then, their coat is made of the best broad cloth, and they think it would be a little going down if they were to speak to those who wear peasant garb or white coats during the week. They are a little better off in the world, and so they do not receive their poorer brethren. This is the silliest pride in the world! I have not a word to say about it. It is too mean to be worth a man's words spent upon it. But there is some pride which a Christian will entertain, and almost think it is humility! It is a pride about his experience—a pride of having at last grown wise! He thinks he has learned too much ever to be proud, which proves that he is puffed up beyond measure! He says, "Well, those young people are very self-conceited." He looks down on beginners and says, "Their greatest danger is to be lifted up with pride;" while as for himself, good sober man, so old and experienced, it is not possible that he should be proud—yet proud all the while! To such we say, "What have you that you have not received?" I know people say it is more respectable to owe 30,000 pounds than it is to break for three. But if I must be in debt, I think I would rather be the smaller debtor. Yet, how many there are, because they have received more from God than others—that is, they are greater debtors than others—they are proud! You have more gifts than I have! Well, it only means you have got twice as much work to do as I have! So you have more wealth than I; that means you are more in debt to God than I, and are you proud of being in debt? Let the Christian be humble-minded. Yet, we talk of humility. What a lump of pride we are—fussy, stuck-up, wanting to have respect paid to us! If somebody comes between the wind and our nobility, how angry we are! If somebody abuses us, what a state we are in! And oh, if anybody calls us bad names, how harshly we

consider ourselves treated! If we thought less of ourselves we would not be quite so sensitive. Where should dust go but on the dunghill? And where should they put the man who knows himself to be vile but in the worst place? Yes, let them put us there, they will not give us worse than we deserve if we come to know ourselves in the sight of God! Yes, we may say of the slanderer, "Man, you have not hit it, you have not found out my fault; if you knew me better you could hit me harder." Yes, we might sometimes say to some cruel enemy, "You have made some mistake there, for I am innocent of that before God; but if you had read my heart and known how false I have been to my Lord, and how unbelieving, you might have exposed me, and hit me in a sore place, and smitten me under the fifth rib." I think we ought always to say, "Well, we do not deserve it for that, but we deserve it for something else, so we will take it patiently, and be willing that men should wipe their shoes on us if it will but glorify Christ." Yes, let them call us devils if we may but help to do angel's work in redeeming men; let them scout us, hiss at us and say, "Yah! There goes a hypocrite!" or anything else they like, if we may but magnify Christ while living, and enjoy Him when we shall come to die! Be humble, Christian, for what have you that you have not received?

Next, let us be *grateful*. All that we have we have received from Christ. Let us love Him. When our friends give us love we give them love in return. But what is that which we owe mother, father, husband, wife, or friend compared with what we owe Christ? Let your hearts burn; let your love be inflamed. Fall at His dear feet; embrace them with affection. Spend, and be spent for Him! Live unto Him, and be ready to die for Him! For all you have, you have received of His fullness. I think that what we need as a church is more recognition of the gifts we have as coming from Christ. I do not think we have the gratitude we ought to have to Him. We do not make sacrifices

for Him. We give, it is true, to this cause and to that, but are there half-a-dozen Christians here who have ever made a sacrifice for Christ? He gives us His blood and we give Him a few tears. He gives us sweat and we give Him cold services. He gives us groans and we give Him languishing hymns. He gives us life and death, body, soul, and spirit and we give Him only what we can spare after we have first looked to ourselves—and not all that in most cases! Let us feel, O God, let us feel gratitude to Christ! Let us feel a fire within our bones, and a flame within our hearts, and sevenfold strength in our spirits, not only to believe in His name, but also to suffer for His sake; let gratitude be the inspiration of our lives!

IV. I have not time nor strength to enlarge further upon these points, therefore, the last and not the least important. The text seems to me to be **A MOST SWEET INVITATION; A MOST BLESSED ENCOURAGEMENT TO POOR NEEDY SINNERS.**

So, sinner, you need tonight a new heart. You will never be able to make your heart new yourself—He must give it to you. So, sinner, you need repentance—you can never repent of yourself. He is exalted on high to give repentance. So you need a sense of your own sin and sinfulness—He can make you feel it, for He felt it all Himself. So you do feel your sin, you say, and you want to have it pardoned—He can pardon it, and without exception He has power to forgive sins on earth. Tell me not how vile you have been—He can pardon you! Say not you are guilty of aggravated crimes—He can forgive you! Tell me even that you have stained your hands with blood—He is able to wash out that stain, and make you whiter than snow! Sinner, sinner, sinner, do you need tonight to have your aching heart filled with peace?—He can do it! Of His fullness have the entire host in heaven received. Of His fullness have all the saints on earth received. And you, poor weeping sinner, you may, you *shall* receive, too! They had nothing to bring to Him

any more than you have. They came to Him black in sin—as black as you, and He washed them! They came to Him lost—lost as you can possibly be—He saved them, and He can save you! He asks you to do nothing of yourself, but to trust Him and Him alone. He is God. Oh, trust the Omnipotent One! He is perfect man. Oh, trust the Meritorious One! He died—oh, trust His dying sacrifice! He lives—oh, trust His authoritative plea! Sinner, if we asked you to trust a man, we would think it right that you should object. If he pretended to be a priest, and asked you to trust him, you might turn upon your heels with a sneer. But I bid you trust in no mere man, but in Him who died upon the cross. And He is worthy of your trust! Yonder millions redeemed from death and hell will tell you, “Worthy is the Lamb!”—and thousands here below will tell you, too, “That He is worthy of all your confidence.” May the Spirit of God graciously lead you out of self into Christ, and enable you once and for all to put your trust in Him!

I will tell you, tonight, an anecdote which I think I have repeated before, but not in this house. There was a poor man who had been a long while burdened in spirit—one night he had a dream. To dreams we attach no importance; but this dream happens to be an allegory. He dreamed that he stood at the gates of heaven, longing to enter, but he dared not, and could not, for sin had shut him out. He was longing to come, but he dared not. At length he saw approaching the pearly gates a company of men who came on singing. They were goodly to look upon, dressed in white robes. So he stepped up to one of them, and he said to them, “Who are you?” And they replied, “We are the goodly fellowship of the prophets.” He said, “Alas! I cannot enter with you.” And he watched them until they had passed the gates, and he heard from outside, the voice of song as they were received with welcome. Cast down and troubled, he watched until he saw another company approach, and they

came with music and rejoicing. He said to them, “Who are you?” They were great hosts who had washed their robes, and they replied, “We are the noble army of martyrs.” He said, “I cannot go with you.” And when he heard the shouts a second time ascending from within the gates, his heart was heavy within him at the thought that it was not possible for him to enter there. Then came a third company, and he detected in the van the apostles, and after them there came mighty preachers and confessors of the word. He said in his heart, “Alas! I cannot go with you, for I am no preacher, and I have done nothing for my Master.” His heart was ready to break, for they entered and were lost to his sight; and he heard the triumphant acclamations as the Master said, “Well done, enter into the joy of your Lord.” But as he waited, he saw a greater company approaching. He marked in the forefront Saul of Tarsus, Mary Magdalene, the thief who died upon the cross; and they came streaming on. So he said to one of them, “Who are you?” And they replied, “We are a company of sinners whom no man can number, saved by blood, through the rich, free, sovereign grace of God.” Indeed, all the companies might have said the same, and the dream would have been more complete, but as this poor man, with tears in his eyes, heard these words, he said, “Thank God, I can go with you, for I am a sinner like you, and like you I trust in the merit of Him who died on Calvary.” So he joined their ranks, and was about to enter, but he said in his heart, “When we come, there shall be no songs; they will admit us, but it will be in silence, for we bring no honor to God; we have done nothing for Him— there will be no voices of music when we come in.” But to his surprise the acclaim was louder, the music was more melodious, and the shouts of acclamation were far louder, while they said, “Here are they who come to complete the number of the host whom Jesus bought with His blood.”

Now, sinner, let your ears be attentive, and let your heart bow down to listen while I admonish you. Though you are a poor sinner—if you believe in Christ, you can come in as a poor sinner! Indeed, this is the way we all must come, for there are not, after all—though our imagination, like the dream, may suggest it—there are *not two ways of entrance!* We all come to Him, as empty to be filled, as naked, to be clothed, as lost to be saved. Let me, then, just put the way of salvation plainly to you all. “He who believes and is baptized shall be saved.” So said Christ! This was the commission which He gave to His apostles. What is it to believe? To believe is to trust Christ. To put it as the Negro said, “Massa, I fall flat down on de promise.” That is to believe—to fall flat on the finished work and sure promise of Christ!

The Lord enable you to be rid of self and self-confidence, and to trust Christ! Then, let hell roar, let earth rage, let the law thunder, let the precept threaten, let conscience accuse. But oh, let the Son of God arise! Bound by His word, He will display a strength proportioned to your day. He will never allow you to perish, neither shall any pluck you out of His hand! Amen.

416 THE SHIELD OF FAITH – EPH. 6:16

A Sermon

Delivered on Sunday Morning, October 27th, 1861,

by the

REV. C. H. SPURGEON

At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Above all, taking the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.” — Ephesians 6:16

LIKE THE SPARTANS, every Christian is born a warrior. It is his destiny to be assaulted; it is his duty to attack. Part of his life will be occupied with defensive warfare. He will have to defend earnestly the faith once delivered to the saints; he will have to resist the devil; he will have to stand against all his wiles; and having done all, still to stand! He will, however, be but a sorry Christian if he acts only on the defensive. He must be one who goes against his foes, as well as stands still to receive their advance. He must be able to say with David, “I come against you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel whom you have defied.” He must wrestle not with flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers. He must have weapons for his warfare—not carnal—but “mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.” He must not, I say, be content to live in the stronghold, though he is then well guarded and munitions of stupendous strength his dwelling place may be; but, he must go forth to attack the castles of the enemy, and to put them down, to drive the Canaanite out of the land! Now, there are many ways in which the Christian may

to a great degree forget his marshal character. And alas, there are not a few who, if they are Christians at all, certainly know but very little of that daily warfare to which the Captain of our salvation calls His disciples. They will know most of fighting who cleave closest to king David; who are willing not merely to be with him when he is in Saul's court with his fingers amid the strings of the harp, but going in and out before the people, and behaving discreetly, so that "all Israel and Judah loved David because he went out and came in before them." They must be men who are willing to go with David into the cave of Adullam when he is outlawed, when his character has become a stench in the nostrils of every proud hypocrite, and when Saul the king—in his day the representative of that worldly religion which is not of God, but stands in the strength of man—when he hunts David to seek his life. Thus, the men who are willing to follow Christ in the midst of an ungodly and perverse generation, must come right out from it and be separate; their life will have to be like the life of the men of Naphtali, who risked their lives unto the death in the high places of the field. You will remember that Jonathan, one of the sweetest characters in the Word of God, is one of whom, after all, there is little to be said. His life was inglorious from the very time that he forsook David, and, his death was among the slain of the Philistines, upon the dewless mountains of Gilboa. Alas, poor Jonathan, he could give David his bow, but he could not draw the bow for David; he could give David his garments, even to his armor, but he could not put on the armor for David. The attraction of his father's court was too much for him, and there he stayed. In that Book of the Chronicles, where the Holy Spirit has recorded the names of the mighty men that were with David in Adullam, we find not the name of Jonathan. We find the names of those who broke through the Philistines to give David a drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem; we find

the name of the man who went down into the pit in the time of winter and killed the lion; but Jonathan has not the honor to stand recorded in the list of the great host which was like the host of God!

And there are Christians of that kind nowadays. They have a soft religion—a religion which shuns opposition, a reed-like religion which bows before every blast, unlike that cedar of godliness which stands aloft in the midst of the storm, and claps its boughs in the hurricane for very joy of triumph, though the earth is all in arms abroad! Such men, like those who shunned David in Adullam, lack the faith that shares the glory. Though saved, yet their names shall not be found written among the mighty men, who for our Great Commander's sake are willing to suffer the loss of all things, and to go forth outside the camp bearing His reproach. Those Christians too, who having come clean out from the world, are diligently engaged in building up the church, will have to fight more than others, who are rather built up than builders. You remember, in Nehemiah's day, how the Jews worked when they built the walls of Jerusalem. With one hand they held the trowel, and in the other they held a weapon. "The builders, every one, had his sword girded by his side and so built." Moreover, there were master masons along the wall, and the laborers all actually worked, but here and there you might see a sentinel ready to sound the trumpet so that the workmen might prove warriors, and rush to the fray, and drive away their foes! Be very diligent in doing good to the Church of Christ, and you shall soon have reason to defend your cause. Do but serve your Master zealously and diligently, and let the Lord's blessing rest upon your labors, the Lord's blessing will entail Satan's curse, the smile of God will necessarily incur the frown of man! According to your nonconformity to the world, your daring to be different—when to be different is to be right—according to

your diligence in building up the wall of Jerusalem, you shall be compelled to recognize your soldierly character! To you the text shall come with greater emphasis than to more cowardly souls. “Above all, take the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.”

Having treated the character of the persons who will most require the shield provided in the text, let us proceed at once to discuss the words before us. We will do so thus. First, let us *expound the comparison*. Secondly, *enforce the exhortation*. And thirdly, *propound it as a word of comfort to any trembling sinners who are now specially attacked with the fiery darts of the wicked*.

I. First, then, let us **EXPOUND THE METAPHOR**. Faith is here compared to a shield. There are four or five particulars in which we may liken faith to a shield.

The natural idea which lies upon the very surface of the simile is that faith, like a shield, *protects us against attack*. Different kinds of shields were used by the ancients, but there is a special reference in our text to the large shield which was sometimes employed. I believe the word which is translated “shield,” sometimes signifies a door, because their shields were as large as a door. They covered the man entirely. You remember that verse in the Psalms which exactly has the idea, “You, Lord will bless the righteous, with favor will You compass him as with a shield.” As the shield enveloped the entire man, so, we think faith envelopes the entire man, and protects him from all missiles wherever they may be aimed against him. You will remember the cry of the Spartan mother to her son when he went out to battle. She said, “Take care that you return with your shield, or upon it.” Now, as she meant that he could return upon his shield dead, it shows that they often employed shields which were large enough to be a bier for a dead man, and consequently, quite large enough to cover the body of a live man. Such a shield as that is meant in the text. That is the

illustration before us. Faith protects the whole man. Let the assault of Satan be against the head, let him try to deceive us with unsettled notions in theology, let him tempt us to doubt those things which are verily received among us; a full faith in Christ preserves us against dangerous heresies, and enables us to hold fast those things which we have received, which we have been taught, and have learned, and have made our own by experience. Unsettledness in notion generally springs from a weakness of faith. A man, who has strong faith in Christ, has got a hand with such a grip on the doctrines of grace, that you could not unclasp it, do what you would. *He* knows what he has believed. *He* understands what he has received. *He* could not and would not give up what he knows to be the truth of God, though all the schemes that men devise should assail him with their most treacherous art! While faith will guard the head, it will also guard the heart. When temptation to love the world comes in, then faith holds up thoughts of the future and confidence of the reward that awaits the people of God, and enables the Christian to esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt, and so the heart is protected. Then when the enemy makes his cut at the sword-arm of a Christian, to disable him, if possible, from future service, faith protects the arm like a shield, and he is able to do exploits for his Master, and go forth, still conquering, and to conquer, in the name of Him who has loved us. Suppose the arrow is aimed at his feet, and the enemy attempts to make him trip in his daily life—endeavors to mislead him in the uprightness of his walk and conversation? Faith protects his feet, and he stands fast in slippery places. Neither does his foot skip, nor can the enemy triumph over him! Or suppose the arrow is aimed at the knee, and Satan seeks to make him weak in prayer, and tells him that God will shut out his cry, and never listen to the voice of his supplication? Then faith protects him,

and in the power of faith, with confidence, he has access to God, and draws near unto His mercy seat. Or let the arrow be aimed at his conscience, and let it be winged with the remembrance of some recent sin; yet faith protects the conscience, for its full assurance of atonement quenches the fiery darts with that delightful text, “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” So there is no part of a man which is not secure. Although Satan will certainly attack him in every direction, yet, let him come where he will—

“He who has made his refuge God,
Shall find a most secure abode.”

Nor does faith only protect the whole man, but, if you will think for a moment, you will see that the Apostle suggests the idea that *it protects his armor, too*. After re-counting various pieces, he says, “Above all.” The man of God is to put on the belt and the breastplate, and he is to be shod, and he is to wear his helmet. But, though these are all armor, yet faith is armor for his armor! It is not only a defense for him, but a defense for his defenses. Thus faith not only shields the man, but shields his graces, too. You may easily perceive how this is. Satan sometimes attacks our sincerity. He tries to cut the belt of truth which is about our loins. But faith enables us to be all sincere; like Moses who forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, and refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. Then the enemy will often make an attack against our righteousness, and try to batter our breastplate. Yet does faith come in and enable us like Joseph to exclaim, “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God.” Or like Job we cry, “Till I die I will not remove my integrity from me.” Or like David we can cry, even in the worst of slanders, “You Lord, who delivered me out of the jaw of the lion, and out of the paw

of the bear, will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.” You see how faith guards the breastplate and protects the belt? All our virtues are unable to live of themselves, they need grace to preserve them, and that grace is given us through faith. Are you meek? Cover your meekness with faith, or else you will give way to a hasty speech! Are you full of decision? Let your decision be shielded with confidence in God, or else your decision may waver, and your firmness may give way. Have you the spirit of love and gentleness? Take care that you have the shield of faith, or your gentleness may yet turn to anger, and your love be changed to bitterness! We must protect our graces with faith as well as the nature they adorn. It is not simply the head but the helmet; not merely the feet, but the shoes; not the loins, but the belt—all must be shielded and secured by this all-covering, all-protecting, all-triumphant shield of faith!

In the second place, let me suggest that faith like a shield *receives the blows which are meant for the man himself*. Some Christians think that faith would enable them to escape blows—that if they had faith everything would be quiet, everything would be peaceful and calm. I know how young Christians imagine this. They think as soon as ever they have come out of their first convictions of their own sinfulness, and found the Savior, oh, now they are going to ride softly to heaven, singing all the way! Why did they put their armor on at all if there were to be no battles? Why have they put their hand to the plow if they are not to plow to the end of the furrow, and often to wipe the sweat from their faces through their hard toil? Why enlist, young men, if you are not needed to fight? What is the good of a fair-weather soldier—one who stays at home to feed at the public expense? No, let the soldier be ready when war comes; let him expect the conflict as a part and necessary consequence of his profession. But be armed with faith—it receives the blows! The poor shield is knocked and hammered and battered

like a penthouse exposed in the time of storm; blow after blow comes rattling upon it, and though it turns death aside, yet, the shield is compelled itself to bear the cut and the thrust. So must our faith do—it must be cut at, it must bear the blows. Some people, instead of using the shield of faith to bear the blow, use the skulking place of cowards. Ashamed of Christ they make no profession of Him, or having professed Christ, ashamed of the profession, they hide themselves by deserting their colors, by conformity to the world. Perhaps they are even called to preach the gospel, but they do it in so quiet and gentle a way, like men who wear soft raiment, and ought to be in kings' houses. Unlike John the Baptist, they are “reeds shaken with the wind.” Of them no one says anything bad because they have done no ill to Satan's kingdom! Against them Satan never roars—why should he? He is not afraid of them; therefore he need not come out against them. “Let them alone,” he says, “thousands such as those will never shake my kingdom!” But, this is not to use the shield of faith! This, I repeat it, is to use the sulking-places of an ignoble coward! Others use the shield of presumption; they think it is right with them when it is not. They are proof, not against the attacks of Satan, but against the weapons of our spiritual warfare. Seared in their conscience as with a hot iron, they fear not the rebukes of God's law. Deadened, even to the voice of love, they bow not before the invitations of Christ; they go on their way caring for none of those things; presumption has made them secure. Such people have no blows to suffer. Their shield lets them go through the world quietly, saying, “Peace, peace, where there is no peace.” But only uplift the shield of faith, bearing the blood-red emblem of the cross, and there are plenty of the knights of hell who are ready to unhorse you! On, champion, on, in the name of Him who is with you; no lance can pierce that shield; no sword shall ever be able to cut through it; it shall preserve you

in all battle and in all strife; you shall bring it home yourself, through it you shall be more than conqueror! Faith, then, is like a shield, because it has to bear the blows.

Thirdly, faith is like a shield because it has good need to be *strong*. A man who has some pasteboard shield, may lift it up against his foe, the sword will go through it and reach his heart. Or perhaps, in the moment when the lance is in rest, and his foe is dashing upon him, he thinks that his shield may preserve him, and lo it is dashed to splinters and the blood gushes from the fountain and he is slain. He who would use a shield must take care that it be a shield of proof. He who has true faith, the faith of God's elect, has such a shield, that he will see the swords of his enemies go to a thousand splinters over it, every time they smite the shield of faith! And as for their spears, if they but once come in contact with this shield, they will break into a thousand splinters, or bend like reeds when pressed against the wall—they cannot pierce it, but they shall themselves be quenched or broken in pieces! You will say, how then are we to know whether our faith is a right faith, and our shield a strong one? One test of it is it must be all of one piece. A shield that is made of three or four pieces in this case will be of no use. So your faith must be all of one piece; it must be faith in the finished work of Christ; you must have no confidence in yourself or in any man, but rest wholly and entirely upon Christ, else your shield will be of no use! Then your faith must be of heaven's forging or your shield will certainly fail you; you must have the faith of God's elect, which is of the operation of the Holy Spirit who works it in the soul of man. Then, you must see to it that your faith is that which rests only upon the truth of God, for if there is any error or false notion in the fashioning of it, that shall be a joint in it, which the spear can pierce. You must take care that your faith is agreeable to God's Word that you depend upon true and real

promises, upon the sure word of testimony and not upon the fictions and fancies and dreams of men. And above all, you must mind that your faith is fixed in the person of Christ, for nothing but a faith in Christ's divine person as "God over all, blessed forever," and in His proper manhood when as the Lamb of God's passover He was sacrificed for us—no other faith will be able to stand against the tremendous shocks, and the innumerable attacks which you will receive in the great battle of spiritual life! Look to your shield! Not so fast there with that painted God! Not so fast there with that proud symbol which has no strength in it; see to your shield! See if it is like the shields of Solomon which were borne before the king, each one made of gold. Or at least, let them be like the shields of Rehoboam, every one of the best brass, so that there is found no wooden shield in your hand, which may be dashed in pieces when you need its help most!

But, to pass on—for we must not pause long on any one particular—faith is like a shield because it is of no use except it is *well handled*. A shield needs handling, and so does faith. He was a silly soldier who, when he went into the battle, said he had a shield but it was at home! So there are some silly professors who have a faith, but they have not got it with them when they need it. They have it with them when there are no enemies. When all goes well with them, then they can believe; but, just when the pinch comes, then their faith fails. Now, there is a sacred art in being able to handle the shield of faith. Let me explain to you how that can be. You will handle it well if you are able to quote the *promises* of God against the attacks of your enemy. The devil says, "One day you shall be poor and starve." "No," says the believer, handling his shield well, "He has said, 'I will never leave you, nor forsake you.'" He has said, "Bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure." "Yes," says Satan, "but you will one day fall by the hand of the enemy."

“No,” says faith, “for I am persuaded that He who has begun a good work in me will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” “Yes,” says Satan, “but the slander of the enemy will overturn you.” “No,” says faith, “He makes the wrath of man to praise Him. The remainder of wrath does He restrain.” “Yes” says Satan, as he shoots another arrow, “you are weak.” “Yes,” says faith, handling his shield, “but ‘my strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” “Yes,” says Satan, “but your sin is great.” “Yes,” says faith, handling the promise, “but He is able to save to the uttermost them who come unto God by Him.” “But,” says the enemy again, drawing his sword and thrusting, “God has cast you off.” “No,” says faith, “He hates putting away, He does not cast off His people, and neither does He forsake His heritage.” “But I will have you, after all,” says Satan. “No,” says faith, dashing the enemy’s jaws, “He has said, ‘I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.’” This is what I call handling the shield.

But, there is another way of handling it, not merely with the promises, but with the *doctrines*. “Ah,” says Satan, “what is there in you that you should be saved? You are poor and weak, and mean and foolish!” Up comes faith handling the shield doctrinally, this time, and says, “God has chosen the base things of this world, and things which are despised has God chosen, yes, and things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are,” for “not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.” “Has not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He has promised to them who love Him?” “Yes,” says Satan, “if God should have chosen you, yet after all you may certainly perish!” And then, Christian, handling his shield of faith doctrinally, again, says “No, I believe in the final

perseverance of the saints, for is it not written, “The righteous shall hold on His way, and he who has clean hands shall wax stronger”? “Those who You gave Me I have kept, and none of them is lost,” and so forth. So by well understanding the doctrines of grace, there is not a single doctrine which may not, in its way, minister to our defense against the fiery darts of the wicked! Then the Christian soldier ought to know how to handle the shield of faith according to the rules of observation. “Yes,” says the enemy, “your confidence is vain, and your hope shall soon be cut off.” “No,” says faith, “I have been young and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken.” “Yes, but since you have fallen into sin, God will leave you.” “No,” says faith, “for I saw David, and he stumbled, but yet the Lord surely brought him out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay.” To use this shield in the way of observation is very profitable when you mark the way whereby God has dealt with the rest of His people; for as He deals with one, so He will deal with the rest, and you can throw this in the teeth of your enemy. I remember the ways of God. I call to remembrance His deeds of old. I say, has God cast off His people, has He forsaken one of His chosen? And since He has never done so, I hold up my shield with great courage, and say He never will! He changes not! As He has not forsaken any, He will not forsake me!

Then there is another blessed way of handling this shield, and that is *experimentally*. When you can look back, like the Psalmist, to the land of Jordan and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar, when you can return to those days of old, and call to remembrance your song in the night, when your spirit can say, “Why are you cast down, O my soul, why are you disquieted within me? Hope you in God, for I shall yet praise Him.” Why, brothers and sisters, some of us can talk of so many deliverances, that we know not where to end, and

scarcely do we know where to begin! Oh, what wonders has God done for us as a church and people! He has brought us through fire and through water. Men did ride over our heads, but up to now, all things have worked together for our good! His glory has appeared amidst all the villainies and slanders of men to which we have been exposed. Let us handle our shield, then, according to the rules of past experience, and when Satan tells us that God will fail us at the last, let us reply, “Now you lie, and I say it to you to your face, for what our God was in the past, He will be in the present, and in the future, and so on even to the end.” Young soldiers of Christ, learn well the art of handling your shield!

Lastly, for the matter of the figure; the shield in olden times was an emblem of the warrior’s honor, and more especially in later days than those of Paul. In the age of chivalry, the warrior carried his coat of arms upon his shield. Now, faith is like a shield, because it carries the Christian’s glory, the Christian’s coat of arms, the Christian’s escutcheon! And what is the Christian’s coat of arms? Well, good Joseph Irons used to say it was a cross and a crown, with the words “No cross, no crown”—a most blessed coat of arms, too! But, I think the Christian’s best coat of arms is the cross of his Savior—that bloodied cross; always stained, yet never stained; always dyed in blood, yet always resplendent with ruby brightness; always trod on, yet always triumphant; always despised, yet always glorified; always attacked, yet always without resistance, coming off more than conqueror! Some of the old Reformers used to have an anvil for their coat of arms, and a significant one, too, with this motto, “The anvil has broken many hammers.” By which they meant that they stood still, and just let men hammer at them till their hammers broke of themselves! Another old coat of arms with some of the Reformers was likely to be a candle with a great many enemies all puffing to blow it out, and

though they all blew as hard as they could, yet the candle did but burn the brighter! Out of darkness came light, and from all their attacks the light grew stronger! This morning put your coat of arms upon your shield, and lift it up; let that blood-red cross be your choice; then when your battle is over, they will hang your shield up in heaven; and when the old heraldries have gone, and the lions, and tigers, and beasts, and all manner of strange things have vanished from remembrance, that cross and your old shield, indented with many a blow, shall be honorable with many a triumph before the throne of God! Above all things, then, take the shield of faith!

II. I now leave the expounding of the figure in haste, and pass on to **ENFORCE THE EXHORTATION**. “Above all taking the shield of faith.”

If you sent a servant upon an errand and you said to him, “Get so-and-so, and so-and-so, and so-and-so, but above all, now see to such-and-such a thing;” he would not understand that he ought to neglect any, but he would perceive that there was some extra importance attached to one part of his mission. So let it be with us. We are not to neglect our sincerity, our righteousness, or our peace—but above all, as the most important, we are to see to it that our faith is right—that it is true faith, and that it covers all our virtues from attack. The necessity of true faith is clearly explained by the text. Faith is here said to have a quenching power. The ancients were likely to use small arrows, perhaps light cane arrows which were tinged with poison. They would be called fiery darts, because they no sooner touched the flesh or even grazed the skin, than they left a fiery poison in the veins. Sometimes, too, they employed darts which were tipped with hemp that had been dipped in some inflammable spirit, and were blazing as they flew through the air in order to set the tents of their antagonists on fire, or burn down houses in besieged cities. Now faith has

a quenching power; it sees the temptation or the blasphemy, or the insinuation coming against it with poison, and with fire in it to take away its life or to burn up its comforts. Faith catches the dart, not only receives it, but takes away its sting, and quenches the fire. Oh, it is wonderful how God sometimes enables His people to live in the midst of temptations and tribulations as though they had none of them! I believe that some of the martyrs, when they were burned in the fire, suffered hardly any pain, because the joy and peace which God gave them delivered them from the vehement heat! This I know. There are times when everybody is speaking well of some of us, and we are wretched by reason of the world's flattery. We do not want to be called "Son of Pharaoh's daughter." And yet there are other times when, though everyone speaks ill, our peace is like a river, and our righteousness like the waves of the sea! Truly at such times we can say, "Now I am in my proper place; this is where I should be— outside the camp bearing the reproach of Christ." The praise of man is deadly and damnable; his censure is goodly and godlike. Let it come; it cannot dishonor, it does but ennoble! Thus does it often happen that faith quenches the fire of attack, no, more—it turns the attack itself into comfort, extracts honey from the nettle, and sweets of joy from the wormwood and the gall! "Above all, take the shield of faith."

Another commendation which the text gives is this—that faith alone, out of all the pieces of armor, is able to quench *all* the darts. The helmet can only keep off those that are aimed against the head. The foot is only and alone protected by the sandals. The breast alone is guarded by the breastplate, but faith protects against all attacks! Have all other virtues, but most of all have faith, for faith is the *cure-all*, it is the universal remedy; it is good not only for the heat of fever, but for the shaking of fever. It is good for everything—good for the timid to make

them strong, good for the rash to make them wise; it is good for those who are desponding to make them brave, and good for those who are too daring, to make them discreet. There is no respect in which faith is not useful to us. Therefore, whatever you leave out, see to your faith! If you forget all besides, be careful above all, that you take the shield of faith!

And then, again, we are told above all to take the shield of faith, *because faith preserves from all sorts of enemies*. The fiery darts of the *nicked*! Does that refer to Satan? Faith answers him. Does it refer to wicked men? Faith resists them. Does it refer to one's own wicked self? Faith can overcome that! Does it refer to the whole world? "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith." It matters not who the enemy may be; let the earth be all in arms abroad, this faith can quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. Above all then, take the shield of faith. I know there are some ministers who seem to teach doubting as a duty. I cannot; I dare not. Above all, take the shield of faith! You know in the old Grecian contests the aim of the enemy was to get near enough to push aside the shield, and then to stab under the armor. And that is what Satan wants to do. If he can knock aside the shield, and get under it, then he can mortally stab us. Take care of your shield! Do not live in perpetual unbelief. Be not always cast down. Pray unto your God till you can say—"I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him." Oh, the old saints were not always full of doubts! "My beloved is mine and I am His," said Solomon. David said—"Say unto my soul, I am your salvation." "The Lord is my salvation." "The Lord is my shepherd." Job, too, could say, "I know that my Redeemer lives." Paul could speak very confidently in many places. And why should we be content to say—"I hope, I trust"—when they said they knew, and were persuaded—all was well between God and their souls? Let it be

so with us! Unbelief dishonors us, weakens us, destroys our comforts, and prevents our usefulness. Faith will make us happy, and make us useful, and what is best of all, it will enable us to honor God on earth, and to enjoy His presence while yet we are in the low-lands of this present world!

III. Lastly, I have a word or two to say by way of conclusion to some **POOR SINNER WHO IS COMING TO CHRIST, BUT WHO IS GREATLY VEXED WITH THE FIERY DARTS OF THE WICKED ONE.**

You remember how John Bunyan in his *Pilgrim's Progress* represents Christiana and Mercy and the children coming to knock at the gate? When they knocked, the enemy who lived in a castle hard by, sent out a big dog, which barked at them at such a rate that Mercy fainted, and Christiana only dared to knock again, and when she obtained entrance, she was all in a tremble. At the same time, hard by in the castle, there were men who shot fiery darts at all who would enter; and poor Mercy was exceedingly afraid because of the darts and the dog. Now, it generally happens that when a soul is coming to Christ, the devil will dog him. As sure as ever he feels his need of a Savior and is ready to put his trust in Christ, it will be true of him as of the poor demoniac child—as he was a coming, the devil threw him down and beat him. Now, poor tempted sinner, there is nothing that can bring joy and peace into your heart but faith. Oh, that you may have grace this morning to begin to use this shield! “Ah sir,” you say, “I have been looking within, and I cannot see anything that is good; I have been looking to my experiences, and I am afraid I have never felt as So-and-So did.” That is the way to ruin yourself! Did you ever hear of a man who in cold winter’s weather got warm by rolling on the ice, and saying, “I don’t feel any heat as some people do”? No, because he is looking in the wrong place to get the heat. If you expect to get anything in yourself, you expect more than Paul

ever got, for he said after he had long known his Master, “I know that in me—(that is, in my flesh)—there dwells no good thing.” “Oh, sir,” you reply again, “I find I am willing to do a great many things, but I cannot; and when I would be what I should be, I find a resistance somewhere within my own breast.” Well and what of that? Even so did the apostle—“When I would do good, evil is present with me.” The fact is you have no business to look there! These things are not shields against Satan. What cares he for your experiences? Were they never so good he would still roar at you! What he is afraid of is your faith. Throw down these things, then, which only encumber you and expose you, and lay your breast bare to his attacks, and take up the shield of faith! What has Satan said to you? “You are too great a sinner to be saved.” Well, quote this text, “Him that comes unto Me, I will in nowise cast out.” I had a lesson this week in the case of a good Christian man, who through feebleness of mind has fallen at last into the deepest despair. I never met with a person in such awful despair as he was, and you cannot tell how it puzzled me to give him any sort of comfort; indeed, I failed after all. He said, “I’m too big a sinner to be saved.” So I said, “But the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” “Yes,” he said, “but you must remember the context, which says, ‘If we walk in the light as He is in the light we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleans us from all sin.’ Now, I do not walk in the light,” he said; “I walk in the dark, and I have no fellowship with the people of God now, and therefore, it does not apply to me.” “Well,” I said, “but He is able to save to the uttermost them who come unto God by Him.” “That is the only text,” he said, “I never can get over, for it says ‘to the uttermost,’ and I know I cannot have gone beyond that, and still it does not yield me comfort.” I said, “But, God asks nothing of you but that you will believe Him; and you know if

you have ever so feeble a faith you are like a child—the feeble hand of a child can receive; and that is the mark of a Christian—‘of His fullness have we all received’—and if you only receive with your hand, that is enough.” “Yes,” he said, “I have not the hand—I have not the hand of faith.” “Very well,” I said, “you have the mouth of desire; you can ask, if you cannot receive with the hand.” “No,” he said, “I have not. I do not pray, I cannot pray. I have not the mouth of desire.” “Then,” I said, “all that is needed is an empty place, a vacuum, so that God can put it in.” “Ah, sir,” he said, “you have got me there! I have a great deal of vacuum; I have an aching void—a vacuum. If ever there was an empty sinner in this world, I am one.” “Well,” I said, “Christ will fill that vacuum! There is a full Christ for empty sinners.” Let me now say the same to you as I said to that poor man. All God wants is a vacuum. You have a vacuum. This is not much to have; simply to be empty, to be pumped dry, to have nothing at all in you. But then, “He fills the hungry with good things, and the rich He sends away empty.” All that is needed is to be down there on the ground. It is not hard work. It is not to sit up, nor to stand up, nor to kneel, but to lie there at His feet. And when He sees the soul flat on its face before Him, He will have mercy upon you!

Now, soul, for that shield of faith. Say to Satan, “In the name of God I dare believe.” “You are a great sinner,” he says. “Yes, but I believe He is a great Savior.” “But you have sinned beyond all hope.” “No, there is forgiveness with Him, that He may be feared.” “But,” he says, “You are shut out.” “No,” you say, “though He slays me, yet will I trust Him.” “But, your disease is of long standing.” “Yes, but,” you say, “if I but touch the hem of His garment, I shall be clean.” “But,” Satan says again, “how dare you? Would you have the impudence?” “Well,” you say, “if I perish I will trust Christ, and I will perish only there.” Have it fixed in your soul that in the teeth of everything,

you will trust Christ—that be you such a sinner or not, you will trust still Christ—that whether Satan's accusations are true or false, you mean to have done answering them, and simply trust Christ. Ah, soul, then you shall have such joy and peace that nothing shall be like it! O that you would believe on Jesus *now*! Leave your feelings, leave your doings, and your willings—and trust Christ. “I dare not,” says one. Dare it, man, dare it! You cannot do wrong, for He commands you. This is the commandment, “That you believe on Jesus Christ whom He has sent.” “Oh, but I may be lost even if I do.” You will be lost if you do not, for “He who believes not shall be damned.” “But I am afraid of being condemned if I were to believe.” “He who believes not is condemned already.” You are like the poor lepers at the gate; you are dying, and you say, “Let us fall to the Syrians—if they kill us we can but die, and if they save us alive we shall live.” Say, as Benhadad did concerning King Ahab, “We have heard that the kings of Israel are merciful kings, but let us put ropes upon our necks, and go out to the king of Israel—perhaps he will save our life.” So say you to God, “I have heard that You are merciful; if there is a wretch out of hell that deserves to be in it, I am that sinner. If there is one who now feels that earth is provoked against him, and the ground says, swallow him up; and heaven is provoked against him, and cries, let the lightning flash destroy him; and the sea says, drown him; and the stars say, smite him with pestilence; and the sun says, scorch him; and the moon says let him be blasted; and the mildew says, let me devour his crops; and fever says, let me cut off the thread of his life—if there is such a wretch out of hell, I am he!” Yet, say, but to God, “By Your grace I believe in Your mercy, I believe in Your promise, I believe in your Son Jesus, I believe in His precious blood, and here I am—do with me as seems good in Your sight.” Say but this, and you shall have mercy and pardon, and peace. My dear hearers, shall I say

this for myself and not for you? No, but may God grant that many a score of you this morning may be led to put your trust in Him who has said, “They who trust in Me shall never be confounded.”

417 SCOURGE FOR SLUMBERING SOULS – AMOS 6:1

**A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Morning, November 3rd, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

“Woe to those who are at ease in Zion.” — Amos 6:1

IN ITSELF considered, it is no ill thing to be at ease; no, it is a great blessing to be at ease in Zion in the healthy sense and meaning of that word. Is it not one of the invitations of Christ—“Come unto Me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest”? Is not this one of the promises made to the believer—“His soul shall dwell at ease, and his seed shall inherit the earth”? (Psa 25:13). Is not this the privilege which is accorded to the Church of God, in the words of Isaiah—“Your eyes shall see Jerusalem a *quiet* habitation”? (Isa 33:20). And still more in the prophecy of Jeremiah 46:27—“Jacob shall return, and be in rest and at ease, and none shall make him afraid”? To have perfect quietness in Christ is indeed a privilege which only belongs to those who have entered into that which is within the veil! Oh, to enter into our rest, for “They who have believed do enter into rest and have ceased from their own works as God did from His.” They have found in the finished work of Christ enough for their soul’s repose; they see in the faithfulness and power of God enough support for the future, whatever troubles it may bring; they see in the precious blood

of Christ sufficient atonement for the past whatever its sins may have been; and in communion and fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ, abundant joy for the present, whatever may be its trials, its difficulties its straits, or its fears. It is a blessed thing then, understanding the word “ease” in its good sense, to be at ease in Zion; so good a thing that it is denied to the wicked, for “The wicked are like the troubled sea which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.” And of the wicked it may be said, “And among these nations shall you find no ease, neither shall the sole of your foot have rest; but the Lord shall give you there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind” (Deut 28:65). Oh, beloved brothers and sisters, it is a thing worth praying for, and worth striving after, that our spirit may have perfect rest, for the kingdom of God is peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit! Jesus is king of Salem and Prince of Peace, “and the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever” (Isa 32:17). Peace, peace to you, you troubled one! In the world you shall have tribulation, but in Christ you shall have peace!

But it seems there is also another sense in which the word “ease” may be used, for the text says, “Woe to those who are at ease in Zion.” This is a carnal ease, a fleshly security; it is not the confidence of a man who is pardoned, but the ease of a hardened wretch who has learned to despise the gallows! It is not the assurance of one who is on the rock, but the ease of a senseless drunk whose house is tottering from its sandy foundations, and yet he riots at full speed! It is not the calm of a soul at peace with God, but the ease of a madman, who, because he has hidden his sin from his own eyes, thinks he has concealed it from God. It is the ease and peace of one who has grown callous, hardened, brutalized, stupid, sullen, and careless, who has begun a sleep which God grant may soon be broken,

or else it will surely bring him where he shall make his bed in hell!

As I know there are many in this congregation who are at ease in Zion—I shall not draw the bow at a venture this morning, but in the name of God shall aim straight at the heart. I shall first of all—laboring all the morning long as God's servant to wake up those who are at ease in Zion—try to wake them *by calling out their names*, for that is said to be an admirable method of waking sleeping men. Secondly, *by shedding a light upon their eyes*, for there are many who can sleep in the night who will not sleep so comfortably in the day; and then, thirdly, *by sounding the trumpet in their ears*. Yes, and such a trumpet, that if God the Holy Spirit is here, it shall sound like the blast of the archangel, and make those quiver with fright even if they turn not unto God! But all these things will fail unless the Holy Spirit, who quickens those who are dead in trespasses and sins, shall be present to wake and to save these sleepers!

I. First, in order to the awakening of the many who are at ease in Zion, we will **CALL OUT THEIR NAMES**—which are to be found in the chapter before us.

1. The name of the first sleeper in Zion is *Presumptuous*. His character is described in the first verse—"They trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came." Alas, proud heart, you come to this house, and you go from it quite content and easy because you say to yourself, "I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing." "Let the drunkard tremble," you say, "I have always been moral; let the dishonest bow their heads, I have always walked in integrity before men." And so you wrap yourselves in your good works, and hope thus to stand complete before God; so you trust in your mountain of Samaria and say, "My mountain stands firm; I shall never be moved." I can hardly understand your being at ease in self-righteousness,

if you occupy these seats often, for there are none against whom we hurl such thunderbolts as those workmongers, those merit-trusters, who boast of themselves that they are righteous, and deceive both themselves and others! Against no man do we utter sterner denunciations than against him who, going about to establish his own righteousness, has not submitted himself to the righteousness of Christ!

Why, man, your purest works are only dross and dung in the sight of God! Your best performances are defiled with the marks of your sin-black hands! They cannot even bear the twilight of an awakened conscience; how, then, will they bear the sevenfold sunlight of God's great judgment day, when He shall bring all things before Him, and everything shall be naked and open? He who trusts in his own works leans upon a broken reed! As well attempt to cross the storm-tossed ocean upon a child's paper boat, or mount to the heaven of God in the philosopher's balloon! As well attempt to put out the fire of a blazing prairie by carrying in your hand a little water scooped from the neighboring stream, as hope by any means to get rid of your own iniquities by doing better, or of your past sins by future holiness! I tell you, man, your prayers, your alms-giving, your fasting, your repenting, your church-going, your chapel-going are all as nothing in the eyes of Him who demands perfect obedience, and will never accept anything short of perfect righteousness from man. Away, away, away with these gaudy rags! They will be unraveled before long; you may toil at the loom night and day, but your work shall be torn in pieces and not a shred shall be left—you are spinning nothing but a spider's web which Justice shall tear in pieces, and like Adam, whose fig leaves could never cover him, you shall cry before God, "I knew that I was naked, and I hid myself." Woe, then, to those who are at ease in Zion, whose name is Presumptuous.

But the great mass of you escape while I speak thus. “No,” you say, “We do not belong to that class; we know the gospel better than that; we are orthodox Protestants, and stand fast with good Martin Luther, and believe that a man is justified by faith, and not by the works of the law.” Remember, you may believe that and yet not be justified yourself! You may hold the doctrine plainly enough; but it is one thing to believe in the justification of the ungodly, and quite another thing for an ungodly man to be justified!

2. A second name is put before us in the roll, and that is *Not-now*, or *Procrastination*. Surely there are hundreds of you who will recognize your own surname; hear how Amos describes you in the third verse—“You who put far away the evil day.” Yes, you are only young apprentices at present, and when your time is out you think it will be early enough to attend to matters of soul-interest. Or you are only journeymen at present, and when you have earned sufficient money to set you up in business, then will be the time to think of God! Or you are little masters, and have just begun business—you have a growing family and are struggling hard, and this is your pretense for procrastination. You promise that when you have a nest egg, and can quietly retire to a snug little villa in the country, and your children have grown up, then, you will repent of the past, and seek God’s grace for the future. All these are self-delusions of the grossest kind; for you will do no such thing! What you are today you will probably be tomorrow, and what you are tomorrow you will probably be the next day, And unless a miracle shall happen, that is to say, unless the supernatural grace of God shall make a new man of you, you will be at your last day what you now are—without God, without hope, and a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel! Procrastination is the greatest of Satan’s nets; in this he catches more unwary souls than in any other. “Not-now; not now; not now; time enough;

time enough; time enough,” says Satan. “Taste the world’s pleasure first! Come, take your swing, go to the end of your tether, and then, pull up all of a sudden and repent!” Well knows he that, then, he will have the same cry for them—“*Not now. Not now,*” until they come into the jaws of death and, then, he will turn around and hiss into their ears the awful words—“Too late! Too late! Too late!” Though he will be as much a liar then as he is now, for it is never too late if the Lord makes bare His arm. Now, might I not look around these galleries, and down upon these pews below, and remember many of you who for these seven or eight years have been hearers of the gospel from my lips? There have been many times when you have trembled, and been alarmed. You felt like Felix, but like he, you cried—“Go your way for this time, when I have a more convenient season I will send for you.” Ah, that convenient season has not come yet, and I fear it never will! Bless the Lord; there have been many hundreds of you whose own season never came—but the Lord made you come at *His* convenient season, and not at yours! May it be so with others of you! But alas, alas, how large a proportion of those who come into this house of prayer still say, “Not-now, not now,” and put off the day, and will not come. They think they are to live forever, imagining that the judgment day will never approach, that they shall never have to give an account before God, and so they go on in their sins till the chapter shall end, and the *finis* shall be written in black letters—for, “Depart you cursed!” shall be their sentence!

3. The third name is *Evil-doer* or *Sin-lover*. “They cause the seat of violence to come near.” Into the house of God, there are many who still persevere in their sins, though not as comfortably as they would have done if they had neglected the means of grace. Many, I know, have come here, who at last said, “Well, this will not do. I cannot hear the gospel, and have the

shop open on Sunday; I cannot act as I have done in my business, and yet be a seat-holder there—one of the two must be given up.” And God has given them divine grace to serve Jehovah, and renounce Baal! But ah, there is a large proportion that is undecided! Where were you last night? Here you sit, and who would know but that you are the greatest saints out of heaven? But, perhaps, some time or other last week, you sat where none would know that you were the basest sinners out of hell! Many attend the synagogue of Satan, as well as the synagogue of God; some can give the right hand to religion, while the left hand clasps their iniquity! Oh, those sweet sins, those darling sins men hug and press to themselves, though they might as well put a viper in their bosom and hug it there, while all the while it infused its venom into their veins! How many *must* indulge their sins! They would have Christ, but they must have their cups, too! They would follow the Savior, but they must have their chambering and wantonness; they would be Christians, but oh, it is a hard road and a narrow one, and they cannot give up their sweet lusts! O soul, am I not calling out your name now? Do I not now describe your character to the very life? Lover of sin, the day shall come when you will hate your sin because of the punishment it shall bring you—for he who woos sin, woos punishment; he who loves iniquity drinks a cup which is sweet at the brim—but the dregs! The dregs! The dregs which must be drained; how direful shall be that burning draught! Oh, the draining of those dregs will last throughout eternity, an eternity of hell!

4. The next name is *Love-self*. “They lie upon beds of ivory and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flocks, and the calves out of the midst of the stall.” This was not wrong; if they had a bed of ivory, there were no more objections to their lying upon that than to their lying upon a common couch. There can be no reason why persons

blest with rank in life where they can use these things should not use them, for every creature of God is good and nothing to be despised, but to be received with thankfulness. Their fault was this, they lived only for self-indulgence. They come under the category of those described by the apostle—"whose God is their belly." They lived only to eat and to drink, to be merry and to make merry with their friends. You know I am no ascetic; my humor is far too warm and genial for me to claim association with John the Baptist, whose meat was locusts and wild honey! My sympathies run with the Master, of whom it is said, "The Son of man came eating and drinking." But still I must, even as He did, protest against those who live only for the flesh, who are simply strainers for meat and drink, whose life-work is to provide food and raiment, who are satisfied as long as they have the richest dainties, and the choicest wines. I must protest against those who even come up to the house of God because they love to have their ears regaled with sweet sounds; and even God's prophet is to them as one who plays a goodly tune upon a pleasant instrument. Self-indulgence! Oh, this is the God of many! They live not for Christ—what do they do for Him? They live not for His Church—what care they for that? They live for self and for self only! And mark, there are such among the *poor* as well as among the rich, for all classes have this evil leaven. Self-honor, self-seeking, these are your gods, O Israel, and multitudes dance and sing in honor of the beloved deities! Fullness of bread often brings on emptiness of heart, and there are many who are like the Israelites in the wilderness, while their meat is yet in their mouth, the wrath of God comes upon them, because their meat is the offering which they offer at the shrine of their god, and that god is their belly! Do I not speak to some such here this morning? Probably those to whom this most applies will say, "Well I do not think that is for me." Probably it is for you, then, for this is a charge

to which no man would like to plead guilty! Among all the sins that are confessed, nobody ever confessed covetousness. No, he only exercises a proper discretion in taking care of himself. He thinks that the excellent of the earth ought to be provided for; he puts himself down among them, and therefore, takes care that he should have not only his bread and his water given him, but whatever else he may desire besides. O Self-lover, remember there are no pampered tables and choice confectioneries in hell. Awake, then, from your dreams!

5. It seems that among those who were at ease in Zion, was one called *Careless*, an individual who belongs to a very large family—we may give him another name, *Giddy*, *Light-hearted*. He is described in the fifth and sixth verses, “Who chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David; that drink wine in bowls and anoint themselves with the chief ointments.” You know how many we have, even among those who frequent our sanctuaries, who say, “Begone, dull care.” They never sit down for half an hour, and turn over the Word of God to see whether these things are so. “No,” they say, “let well enough alone!” They are happy; they are comfortable for the present; and like butterflies, while it is a bright summer’s day, they think the winter is far off. Their whole life is spent in levity. We may call them the froth of society. There is nothing solid in them; they are not solid enough even to be desperately wicked! Even their religion is carelessness. They sing a hymn as though it were a song; when prayer is offered—and they will sometimes go to prayer meetings—they are criticizing the terms which are used before the mighty God! Sometimes they venture to make a profession of religion; but you might hope to build a palace with pillars of smoke, or adorn a queen’s brow with dewdrops, sooner than find any truth in their godliness. Their convictions are always superficial—a sort of scratching of the soil as with the old

plows; but there is no sub-soil plowing; no turning up and breaking the clods; no tearing up of the vitals of their consciences; no revelation of themselves to themselves. Like stony-ground hearers, they receive the Word with gladness, but they have no depth of earth, and after a little while, when the seed springs up, it withers away. Not here and there do we find such, but there are very many careless souls who will never give themselves the healthy exercise of thought! Woe unto you, woe unto you, if thus you are at ease in Zion!

6. And now, to call out the last name in the list, there is one called *Cross-less*. He is described in the sixth verse, “And they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.” It is an awful thing to live in this world without a cross! I have heard of one who, being told of another, that he had never any trials, said he should not like to live in the same town, for he was sure something terrible would happen to him! I was once preaching in a country village where there was an estimable pastor who seemed to have a very quiet and nourishing little church, and I said to him, “Now, yours is the course of life I should prefer, to be quiet and secluded, and not to have an excess of labor. You,” I said, “seem to have no trials.” Ah, it was not long after, he had the most crushing of trials that could happen to man, and his brain reeled beneath it. And so, no doubt, if a child of God should be a little while without a trial, it is only because there is another one coming, and he is having a little respite because a very heavy blow is about to fall upon him! As John Bunyan says in his simply-put rhyme—

“A Christian man is seldom long at ease,
When one trouble’s gone, another does him seize.”

It is written of the ungodly—“Moab has been at ease from his youth; he has not been emptied from vessel to vessel.”

There are such in this congregation! You never had a great trouble in your lives; some little things that you have elevated into trials by sentimentalism have fallen upon you, but you have never had any great racking of mind, no great temptations, or trials, or losses, or crosses. And you are comfortably saying—"I am favored because I have none of these." I think I may add that you are highly abhorred, for only they escape the rod whom God disowns, just as a man dares not chasten another man's child, but is sure to chastise his own, if he loves him! You have escaped crossless till now; take care; your being at ease in Zion on this account is very dangerous! Oh, may God awaken you as I thus describe your case and call out your name!

II. And now, having thus passed through their names, we come to **SHED SOME LIGHT UPON THESE SLEEPERS' EYES.**

Ah, brothers and sisters, this time we have a hopeless errand! It is of no use shedding any light upon these people's eyes; that will not wake them, for, to tell the truth, they are sleeping with the sun of heaven shining upon their eyelids, for the text says they are "*at ease in Zion.*" They were not at ease in Ethiopia where they have never heard the gospel! They were not at ease in Sheba, or the ends of the earth where no warning prophets had been sent! They were at ease *in Zion* where Wisdom cried aloud in the streets, where her oracles were in every house, and where her servitors stand at every door. What is the use of bringing light to these people? We shall not waken them so, but perhaps we may do it by reminding them of this light. And oh, while I do this, my dear hearer, if there is any value in your soul, and if it is worthwhile to be saved, I pray you hear for yourself! "He who has ears to hear, let him hear," while I do in God's name, perform the sorrowful task of endeavoring to wake you out of your sleep!

In the first place, you are asleep, *but you know your danger.* Ah, how many of you foster the sins which *you know* will destroy

your souls; you put your hands into the fire knowing it will burn you, yes, and you have the festering blisters still upon you where you were burnt before! You leap into the furnace knowing that you will be consumed, while you can hear the cries of those who, as your companions, have already felt the heat! Oh, I beseech you to remember that to sin in the light of God is to sin with vengeance, to sin against knowledge is to sin seven times over! He who sins in Sidon or in Tyre is but a petty offender compared with sinners in Chorazin or Bethsaida. According to the degree of privilege is the degree of sin! He who leaps over hedge, and bar, and post, to destroy himself, is a self-destroyer indeed! He who starves with bread in his hand deserves to starve! He who cries of sickness when the physician lives next door, and he refuses to call him in, deserves to die! He, who perishes when Christ's cross is lifted up, when the brazen serpent is held up before his eyes, and he is bidden to look at it, deserves that the fiery serpent should bite him, and that the poison should rankle in his veins! Oh, sin not, I pray you, for you cannot sin so cheaply as others! Strange paradox—to die in the light of God is to die in the thickest darkness.

But again—you *frequently have awakenings*. Oh, I pray God I may never be found among the list of those sleepy preachers who will let their congregations continue peacefully in their sins! I appeal to you, what man's smile have I ever courted, or what man's frown among you have I feared? Have I always been harping upon some sweet doctrine, saying, "Peace, peace, where there is no peace"? Have I not told you what sin will bring upon you? Have not these eyes wept over you, while I have cried, "Oh, that you knew your end, that you would consider these things"? Has not this throat been hoarse when I have called out after you in God's name, as you were going along the downward path? I have heard of a preacher, who in order to be spiritual gave up his ministry, because he said it was

written, “In the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread.” Little was he fit for a minister, for he would soon have known that ministry is the hardest of toil; he who does not know how to combine the two things, to minister and yet to eat his bread with the sweat of his brow, is not a minister of God! If I have preached in such a way that I have found my ministry a light labor, if the preaching of a sermon has been to me but a trifle to be played with, then God be merciful to me for this great evil! But be assured, it is not so. I have come forth some Sunday mornings with the burden of the Lord upon my heart, till I have been bowed down with the weight, and there is not a Sunday night, and has not been for many a day, when I do not come on this platform in such a state both of body and soul, that I pity a dog who has to suffer what I have, under the terror and the weight of the awful responsibility of having to preach to such a crowd as this! If you perish, any one of you, it is not because I have not warned you. It is not because I have not shunned the use of plain language, or have selected courtly phrases to make you think me eloquent. I have come down upon your consciences as with a sledge hammer! I have sought to dash at your hearts that you might turn unto the Lord my God! Woe, then, to those who are at ease under a faithful, laborious, and earnest ministry! God have mercy on such! They need it. O Lord, we pray You lay not this to their charge!

But more than this, have you never thought of it—you who are unsaved in this congregation, and yet are so continually here—that *everything in this place cries out against you?* As often as the pool beneath me is opened, and the ordinance of baptism is administered, every candidate descending into the pool bears witness against you, for as they say—“I am on the Lord’s side,” they leave you behind, and you have this reflection—oh, that you would let it work in you—that you dare not confess Christ. And tonight, when that table shall be spread with the blessed

emblems of His body, and of His blood, they will cry out against you! The bread will say to you—“You have never eaten the flesh of Christ.” The blood will cry to you—“You have never been able to drink of His blood.” The whole communion, as it sets forth the dying of the Lord, will say to you—“You have no interest in Calvary; you have no part or lot in this matter; you are still in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity.” And as each shall partake of that ordinance, you will see the hoary-head receive it, and he will speak to you hoary-headed sinners, old in sin but not yet babes in grace, growing, like dried wood, only the more ready for the fire! And as the young come and take it, they will say to you—“I am young and I know the Savior; you are twice my age, and yet you are strangers to Him.” You go quickly onwards, but not staying to think of Him who shed His blood for men! But perhaps you say that there are hypocrites among them. Then, the very hypocrites warn you, and silently testify. Watch yourself, that you are not a hypocrite. Why, look at this morning’s service; if you are still at ease in Zion, every part of it has been accusing you. We sung this morning—“Welcome sweet day of rest.” Is it the day of rest for you? That is to say, in a spiritual sense can you rest yourself in Christ? Do you feel any comfort in the rising of the Lord from the tomb? Could you join in the last verse—

“Sit and sing myself away,
To everlasting bliss?”

Why, was it not a lie upon your lips, unless you are a believer in Christ? And then came the reading of the Word; was not every verse a thunderclap against those who are at ease in Zion? And then came the prayer, and while we prayed for God’s people, and your heart wandered, was not the prayer an

accusation before Almighty Heaven against you? And now comes the sermon, and oh, if that, too, should be slighted and despised, do you think God shall despise it and slight it? No, “We are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in those who are saved, and in them that perish—to the one we are the savor of death unto death, and to the other the savor of life unto life.” And do you not see, my dear hearers, that this very house of prayer, if you are at ease in Zion, accuses you? When last Sabbath evening, I saw the crowds outside—the many hundreds—I might say the thousands who stood waiting there, and never gained an entrance, though they were willing to tug and strive, and have their garments torn from their backs in the struggle, if they might but enter and hear the Word—I thought of some of you who come so comfortably into your seats, and yet, grow none the better by it. Oh, it were better for you that you had never been born, if you thus sit and hear the Word, and hear it ringing in your very soul, and yet go away and despise it! Many of those outside will rise up in judgment against you. “That man,” they will say, “had a seat I might have had; that man kept me out; and I, hearing the Word—who can tell?—I might have received it, but I could not hear, and he heard it and despised it!”

He who has the child's bread and treads it under foot deserves to starve; he who has the river of the water of life and will not drink it, but muddies it with his foot, deserves to die of thirst! And what shall we say of many here present? Do they despise their privileges? Look at the very seat you are sitting in! Why, it cries out against you! How many times have you sat upon it, and how many times have you gone away unblessed? On the weeknight, when you were absent, there has been a sinner sat there who was saved. You have occupied that place—well, not so very many times, for we have not been in this house long—but add up the times when you occupied your

seat in Park Street, and at the Surrey Music Hall, or Exeter Hall, and how many sermons have been wasted on you? How many invitations to dead ears, warnings to stony hearts? How many cries of God to ears that would not hear the weeping of an earnest ministry over souls that were as flints, and the earnest exhortation and admonition of a tender heart to hearts that were as granite and would not feel? Ah, to be at ease in Zion is to be damnably at ease! To be at ease under a faithful ministry is to be at ease in the jaws of hell! To be at ease when the house, and the gospel, and the Sabbath are all crying out against us, is to be at ease while God is making ready His sword against us!

But, I cannot stay longer, nor do I wish to do so! Oh, that my heart had language and could speak without my lips! Oh, that I might fling myself at your feet and say to you—“Why will you die, O house of Israel, why will you die?” I call you to witness that in putting the things of God far from you, you are guilty of willful and aggravated wickedness—for you have been warned not once nor twice, nor 20 times, but as many times as there are Sabbaths in the year. But this is not enough for me merely to say that I am clear from your blood. Oh, that you may be clear of it yourselves! Oh, sovereign grace, renew the heart! Oh, Jesus, Conqueror, lead them captive at the chariot-wheels of Your love, and make them bow! No human power can do it, but You can! Do it, Lord; do it for Your glory’s sake!

III. And now, I come to my last point. God give me strength to urge it, and may the Holy Spirit send it home. The last point is this—**TO SOUND THE TRUMPET IN THE EARS OF THE SLEEPERS.**

My trumpet has no great variety of sound; it has but one note; not one which *I* give to it, but one which is ordained of God in the text. It sounds—“*Woe! Woe! Woe!*” There is not a man living among us who knows the full meaning of that word—“Woe.” No, there is not a damned spirit in hell who has

got to the bottom of that word—for *there* is an eternity of duration, as well as an infinity of misery! “Woe, woe to those who are at ease in Zion.” I shall bring out but the gentler parts of the note; and first I say— Woe to you, woe to you, *for how is it at all likely that you will ever be saved?* When a man has not attended the house of God, and is suddenly brought in, we say, “Well, I am glad to see that man come in, who can tell?—the ministry may be blessed.” I have noticed that in the innumerable cases of conversion which we have had in this place, the majority have been persons who had not heard the Word long. There have been some few persons who have for five, or six, or 10 years, been regular attendants, but these are not many. The majority of cases are those out of the streets and the world, who had lived in the habitual neglect of the Word of God. They came in and the Word was with power to their souls. I am not to account for fact! I have only noticed it, and I state it as the result of a pretty wide observation. Now, how are you to expect to be blessed? I know God can do all things. We are not to limit the Holy One of Israel; but what are the means to be used with you? “Sickness,” you say, “perhaps will bless me.” But you have been sick; you have had a fever, perhaps the cholera, and you thought you repented, but you did not. Why should you be smitten any more? You will revolt more and more. Perhaps you say—“If I had another ministry, it might be blessed to me.” Oh, I pray you to go and find another! I pray you for your souls’ sake find another if you think so; but if it is that you have already heard a faithful and earnest ministry, then remember, God’s great means has been used, His greatest means—the preaching of the Word! How then can you hope to be saved at all?

And then, another thought comes in. You say you have been 20 years a hearer and you are not saved—now, is there any probability that you ever will be? God is sovereign, He can

save you—we are only speaking now of probabilities—does it not seem very probable that, if when the gospel was very new to you, and you took a lovely interest in it, and still it was not blessed to you, that now, when your ears have got accustomed to our voice till you can go to sleep under it—does it not seem probable that you will never have a blessing under it at all—does it not seem probable that the next 20 years, if you live so long, will be as profitless as the 20 that are passed, and so you will go unsaved to your graves? I think it was Christmas Evans who used the simile of the blacksmith's dog, which when his master first set up in trade was very much frightened with the sparks; but at last, he got to be so used to them that he went to sleep under the anvil. "And so," said the good preacher, "there are many who go to sleep under the gospel, with the sparks of damnation flying about their nostrils." And certainly there are such here! I am told that when they are making the great boilers at Bankside, when a man has to go inside for the first time and hold the hammer, the noise is so frightful that his head aches and his ears seem to have lost all power of hearing for a long time afterwards. But I also am told that, after a week or two, a person can go to sleep in the midst of these boilers while the workmen are hammering outside, and he would sleep none the less for the noise! So I know there is such a thing as going to sleep under the most thundering ministry. I know that men get used to these things—used to being invited, used to being warned, used to being thundered at! They have been pleaded with until they sleep under it! Yes, I doubt not they would sleep even if the world were blazing, if the sun were turned into darkness, and the moon into blood; and I think that even the trumpet of the archangel would not suffice to wake them from their lethargy, if they heard it long enough to be accustomed to it. Oh, then, shall we give you up as hopeless? I think we almost may. If you have heard so long, and been unblessed, there is no

great likelihood that you ever will be blessed; but you will go on as you have been going, till at last you perish. But, remember, for I must sound this trumpet one moment longer, that being at ease in Zion, you are at ease where God will come *first*. Judgment must begin at the house of God; His fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor. He begins with His own floor; He shall purify the sons of Levi. He will begin with those who are in His house, so that judgment will have to begin with you. What a place to be asleep in! Not asleep in the far ends of that country where the invasion can only come after due and proper notice, but asleep on the coast, when Justice is on board its vessel, and is ready to land on the shore! This is to sleep, indeed. Remember, too, you are asleep where God is most severe, for certain it is, according to Scripture, that it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah at the day of judgment, than for Capernaum, where Christ was preached! Why, you are asleep where Justice deals its heaviest blow—asleep where its sword is keenest, where its battle is hottest, and its doom is the most dreadful! Well, if you are sleeping here, I think you will sleep anywhere; and if the thundering of God's great woe cannot suffice to wake you up, what can? O God Almighty! What can? You can do it! O that You would do it! But it shall be a miracle indeed, and a wonder of grace, if these sleepers shall be made to wake.

And now, I send you not home with the word “Woe” in your ears alone. Do you feel the force of what has been said? O my hearers! Do you feel that it is a solemn thing to have been at ease so long? Do you tremble? Are you saying, “O that I might be saved! O that God would have mercy upon me”? He will do it! HE WILL! The gospel is still free to you as it always has been, and lo, we preach it to you. All He asks of you is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. He has not asked an impossible thing, a hard thing—that which takes

weeks to do. It is done in an instant, and when His Spirit is present, it is done at once and completely! “But what is it to believe in Christ?” you ask. It is to *trust* Him—trust Him with your soul—trust Him with your soul just as it is. Trust Him with it now! I do not say to you, “Go home and pray,” though I hope you will—that is not my errand. I have to say, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” That is the way to salvation, and you have no need to go home to do that; if the Spirit of God has shown you your need of Christ, that can be done where you are—in the pew! O may the Spirit enable you in your soul thus to cry to God—“I am guilty of all that has been said; I am guilty; I acknowledge it with sorrow. I feel I cannot save myself, and that the means of grace cannot save me, for they have been tried and they have failed. Lord, I have such a stony heart that nothing can break it but You. I am such a careless, good-for-nothing sinner, that the most earnest ministry is lost upon me! I have been pleaded with long, but I have not turned. I confess that all this has aggravated my guilt; I acknowledge it; and now, if You destroy me, Lord, You would be just. But, O save me! Save me!—not for any good thing I have, for, ‘All unholy and unclean, I am nothing else but sin.’ But Father, Jesus died; I believe that He is able, and that He is willing to save to the uttermost those who come unto You by Him! Just as I am, I put my case into His hands, I am guilty. Lord, I feel it. Oh, that I could feel it more, but Lord, I trust in Him.” Are you touching the hem of His garment, and putting your trust in what He did, and what He is? Then, your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you! Go in peace! “There is therefore, now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.” You are saved the moment you believe in Christ! You are saved! His finished work is yours! It needs not a stitch to be added to it. His complete atonement is yours. It needs no blood of bulls, no

tears of man, to complete it. It is done! You are saved by His grace! Clap your hands, and go in peace!

418 BREAD FOR THE HUNGRY – DEUT. 8:3

A Sermon

Delivered on Sunday Morning, November 10th, 1861,

by the

REV. C. H. SPURGEON

At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.” — Deuteronomy 8:3

THIS NOTABLE TEXT shall teach us two lessons this morning. Its first utterance shall be concerning *providence*, and it's second, concerning the *life of grace in the heart*. Our blessed Lord once used this text with regard to providence, and therefore, we shall be justified in so interpreting it. When the foul fiend suggested to the hungry Savior that He should work a “preposterous miracle” to supply His needs, saying, “If you are the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread,” the Master met him, not with the wooden sword of human reason, but with this true Jerusalem blade, the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, replying to him, “It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” Our glorious David took this smooth and shining stone out of the clear and silvery brook of Scripture, and threw it at Goliath's head—an example to us to meet temptations with the weapons of Scripture, not with the words or traditions of men!

I. Let us for one moment, that we may get the meaning of this text with regard to **PROVIDENCE**, reflect upon the children of Israel in the wilderness.

They were an exceedingly great host, numbering somewhere between two and three millions. They had come forth out of Egypt all of a sudden. They were poor; they were not, therefore, in circumstances to provide themselves with food even for a long march, much less for 40 years! They had each of them brought what food they had, for we read, “They took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading troughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders.” They crossed the Red Sea by miracle. Very soon afterwards, all their provisions must have been exhausted. Picture their position—the kneading troughs are empty, the sterile wilderness of Sin can hardly yield blades of grass enough for their flocks. How could it provide them with any sustenance for themselves? They have a long journey before them, and where have they to look? There is no possibility of commerce by which to purchase food; neither can the land yield any; and every door is shut save one, and that is the door of heaven. All means have failed, but, the God who works with the means can work without them if He pleases; and therefore, He opens the windows of heaven and instead of a shower of rain, there is a shower of food! A substance like coriander seed fell round about the camp; “manna,” so they called it, for they were not sure what it was. They gathered it; they found it dainty to the taste, exceedingly nourishing and wholesome, and they fed upon this bread of heaven for 40 years! Nor did the manna cease till they came unto the land of Canaan, where they ate the corn of the land, and had no need of miraculous supplies. The hunger which was thus supplied had its design; for, as hunger tames the wild and savage beast, so this was sent to humble the proud and carnal minds of the Israelites—an object of no mean

importance! But, that was not the only lesson. The Lord taught them that the sustaining power by which man's life is preserved, is not necessarily in any one substance, but is dependent upon the Word of God. It is true that bread nourishes; and the philosopher would say that there is a nutritive power resident in it. But really, there is no power of any sort anywhere but in God! The power of nourishing and sustaining bodily life is of God, and He, by a continual flowing of His omnipotence, pours the nutritive quality into bread; but, if He chose to, He could pour it into stones! If it were His will, He could make the very dust of the earth nutritious, and supply the lack of man by new means, for He is no more shut up to bread, now, than He was in times that have gone by. Naturalists speak of laws of nature—there is no power in a law; write it as you like, it has no power; the laws of nature are simply the Lord operating in a certain manner, producing certain effects by certain means. This is what we call law—it is God in action—and the reason why bread sustains the body is because God puts His potency into it, by which it receives nutritive virtues, and the body is sustained. Now, the Lord, by the manna, said to the children of Israel, "Man is not fed by bread alone; he is fed by God's power that comes from Him into the bread; and when the bread is lacking, He can infuse that power into the very dews of the night, and they, as they distil, shall become manna full of nutritive energy, to sustain your frame, and you shall know that the power to nourish is not in the second cause, but, in the great first cause; not in the corn, not in the bread, but, in the Lord God Himself." This was the lesson which they were required to learn.

Now, brethren, this is a doctrine which may be rendered exceedingly useful to us. God has power to supply our needs, and therefore, there can be no necessity for us to do wrong in order that we may be fed; for He is not tied to any means; He

can supply the needs of His children, not in one way, but in 50 ways! No, not in 50 ways, but in ways as countless as the sands upon the sea shore! You know how in olden times the Lord occasionally showed this power in miracles. When Moses, Elijah, and our great Lord Himself, fasted 40 days, their natural lives were sustained without food. How was this? We cannot tell the exact mode, but, we can think of several methods. He could have done it by modifying the exhausting processes of nature. He could bid those powers which consume material, work at a slower rate, and whereas the body now expends itself daily by ounces, he could make it expend itself by drachms; He could prevent, as it were, the furnace of human life from consuming its coal, and yet, the vital spark need not be quenched! Or if He pleased, He could give the material necessary for the maintenance of the frame by miraculous means. He could fit and square the stones for the temple of the body, and put them in their place without those masons—the teeth, or those builders—the digestive organs. He could give to the different secretive glands just that which they required and find, if it were necessary, the substances in the earth, or in the air, or in the sky, so that still, without the necessity for bread, man might live! Or He could, if He chose to vary the miracle, increase the nutritive power of the food already received, as in Elijah's case, so that a man might go in the strength of one day's meat for 40 days. At any rate, God has proved by miracle, that although He chooses to act usually according to certain rules, and nourish the body with bread and with meat, yet, He is not tied to rules, but is absolute King and Master, and can do as He wills! Even in the subtle processes by which food is digested and assimilated to the flesh and blood, and bone and sinew, He can work without the means of ordinary chemistries. He can dissolve without distilling devices, and fuse without crucibles. "But," you say, "That cannot concern us, for He never works

miracles now.” Yes, but, I reply, it is most marvelous for God to be able to do a miraculous thing without a miracle! Do you understand me? I think that the working of a miracle is not as wonderful as when that end is gained by ordinary laws and methods—gained without the cessation of any power in nature—simply by providence overruling the powers just as they are! To be miraculous without miracles is the miracle of miracles! I have seen many miracles which were not miracles, but yet, all the more miraculous! The poor have lacked bread; stones were not turned into bread for them, but they had their bread as much by miracle, as if rocks had crumbled into food. We have seen the poor merchant reduced to distress, and he said, “Now I cannot see any hope for me. God must rend His heavens, and put His hand through the very windows to deliver me.” No heavens were rent, but the deliverance came!

Now, the Lord can this day, without a miracle, work such a miracle, that we shall have all our needs supplied, for “man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” You have heard the story of the martyr who was condemned to die. The judge said railingly—“You will be in prison. I shall make you no allowance for food, and what can your God do for you? How can He feed you?” “Why,” said the poor prisoner, “if He wills it, He can feed me from your table;” and it was so, though unknown to his cruel judge; for until his day of burning came, the wife of the judge, touched with sympathy, always secreted food and fed him abundantly even from the persecutor’s table! Perhaps you may have read in “Fox’s *Acts and Monuments*” the wonderful story of Mr. Samuel, who by the Bishop of Norwich was condemned to die. He was tied up by a chain about his middle, and then, condemned to starvation, having about two mouthfuls of bread and two or three drops of water each day until his frame became dry and shriveled. The pains of thirst and hunger were

intense for some days, but after that, he said he fell into a kind of swoon, and he thought he heard a voice saying, “Fear not, Samuel, for from this day you shall never hunger nor thirst again.” And from that hour, though it was several days before he went to heaven in the fiery chariot from the stake, he never knew what it was to thirst or to hunger, though he had no greater supplies than before! I have no doubt the physician would tell us it is possible that as nature will often after excessive pain, become its own balm by deadening sensibility; so in this case, God was pleased, not by miracles, but in the ordinary course of nature, to cast the man into a peculiar state in which he was not conscious of the needs of his body; and while, no doubt, all the ordinary operations were going on which cause hunger and thirst, yet he was not conscious of it, and so the Lord was pleased without a miracle to work a miracle, proving that, “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.”

There are several very interesting illustrations of this great truth in the *Life of Mr. Henry Erskine*. “He was often in great straits and difficulties. Once, when he and his family had supped at night, there remained no bread, meal, meat, nor money in the house. In the morning the young children cried for their breakfast, and their father endeavored to divert them, and did what he could, at the same time, to encourage himself and wife to depend upon that providence that hears the young ravens when they cry. While thus engaged, a countryman knocked hard at the door, and called for someone to help him off with his load. Being asked from where he came, and what he would have, he told them he came from Lady Reaburn with some provisions for Mr. Erskine. They told him he must be mistaken, and that it was more likely to be for another Mr. Erskine in the same town. He replied, No, he knew what he said, he was sent to Mr. Henry Erskine, and cried, ‘Come, help

me off with my load, or else I will throw it down at the door.’ Whereupon, they took the sack from him, and on opening it, found it well stored with fish and meat! At another time, being in Edinburgh, he was so reduced that he had but three halfpence in his pocket. When he was walking about the streets, not knowing what course to steer, one came to him in a countryman’s habit, presented him with a letter in which were enclosed several Scotch ducatoons, with these words written, ‘Sir, receive this from a sympathizing friend. Farewell.’ Mr. Erskine never could find out from where the money came! At another time, being on a journey on foot, his money failed, and he was in danger of being reduced to distress. Having occasion to fix his walking-stick in some marshy ground among the rushes, he heard something tinkle at the end of it. It proved to be two half-crowns, which greatly assisted in bearing his charges home. In days of persecution and poverty, God wonderfully interposes for His people!”

I could myself write a Book of Providences quite as remarkable as William Huntingdon’s *Bank of Faith*. God does supply His people’s needs, this is not a matter of fancy or superstition; we have tried it, and have proved it, and we have as much evidence to prove that truth of God, as to prove any fact which is taken for granted in science or in philosophy! Man does not, to this day, live by bread alone, not by ordinary channels of providence, but God does still supply the lack of His children, and none of them who trust in Him shall be desolate!

I have a consciousness that I am addressing someone this morning who little expected to be here, who, nevertheless, is in such straits that, though a Christian, he is severely tempted and sternly tried by Satan to do what he knows is wrong, but which he thinks is necessary, because he says, “We must live.” My brother, let me influence you, as God’s ambassador, do not

break a way for yourself; stand still and see the salvation of God; it can never be right to do a wrong thing. This is a trial for your faith. Oh, let not your faiths fail you, but seek help from God this morning that you may say, “I can starve, but I cannot sin.” And you may rest assured, that God who delivered the three holy children out of the very midst of the fire, when they would not bow down before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up, will surely deliver you, but if not, yet let your resolution be still firmly fixed—“I will not do this great wickedness and sin against God.”

II. I now turn to the second part of the discourse. The text, evidently enough, has **A SPIRITUAL BEARING**.

Man shall not live by bread alone; which does but nourish the mere coarse fabric of clay; he lives by every word which proceeds out of the mouth of God—that nourishes the immortal spirit; that sustains the heavenly flame which God has put there by the work of regeneration and conversion!

1. Now, in the first place, *the text speaks of a hunger and of its consequences*. Very many of you who are now present, understand what this hunger means. There was a time when the world suited us well enough—if we had enough to eat, and to drink, and we might be clothed like the rest of the Gentiles, this was all that we sought after! But suddenly, God put a new life into us; we knew not how. The first evidence we had of that life was that we began to hunger; we were not satisfied; we were discontented; we were unhappy; we needed a something; we did not know what it was. But this we knew, that it was a something which we must have, or die! The soul was conscience of sin and hungered for pardon; conscious of guilt, and hungered for purity; conscious of absence from God, and hungered and thirsted after His presence. It was that blessed hunger which the Savior spoke of upon the Mount, when He said, “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after

righteousness, for they shall be filled.” Now, speaking of that hunger, you that know of it, can bear witness, that it was a most *painful* thing when first we knew it. It was so painful to some of us that we could not rest; it was a hunger that pinched us in our sleep, in our business, in the fields, and in the streets. We cried, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him! Oh, that I were saved!” And we cried out, “Oh that,” and, “Would that,” and, “Ah,” and, “Oh!” Groans that could not be uttered came up even from our soul after a something which we could not explain! We needed Christ; we had come to know the meaning of that line of our hymn—“Give me Christ, or else I die.” What a painful hunger it was! Never did a starving wretch, who could count his bones, and almost see through his hands, suffer more anguish than we knew when God had taken away from us the very staff of life, and our soul was melted within us by reason of sore famine and straitness of bread!

Then that hunger, moreover, was utterly *insatiable*—nothing could stop it! Friends said, “You must take worldly amusement.” It was like endeavoring to fill a hungry man with shadows! The legalist said, “You must perform such-and-such duties.” It was like attempting to fill a soul with bubbles! Still our hunger cried like the horse-leech, “Give, give, give us something more substantial, more divine than this!” Oh, how some people try to appease hungry souls with music, pictures, riches, honors, and fame. Poor fools! Did they once know what *spiritual hunger* means, they would renounce their idle and ridiculous attempts. None but Jesus, the bread of heaven, can satisfy a hungry soul! Happy are they who have hungered thus, but cursed are they who have never known what it is to hunger and thirst insatiably after Christ!

Next—this hunger is *impetuous*. Sometimes it will come at inconvenient seasons. Master Henry Smith—an old preacher at St. Paul’s Cross, preaching upon the text—“As new-born

babes desire the sincere milk of the Word that you may grow thereby”—observes, “When hunger assails infants, they neither regard leisure, nor necessity, nor willingness of their mothers, but all excuses and business set apart, as soon as they cry for food, they must be fed.” So is it with a man who has begun to feel the need of Christ. It may be said to him, “You can have your religion at home. You do not want to be moping about the shop with it.” Ah, but he cannot help it! He is hungry and hunger knows no clock. It comes when it likes, and having come, it will not be turned back. It is of no use saying, “When I have a more convenient season I will satisfy you.” But hunger says, “Now, now, now—I must eat, I must be fed.” So is it with the truly hungry soul—it needs Christ *now*. If it is not Sunday, if it is not time to go up to worship, it longs to steal away into the cellar, or the attic, or anywhere that it may cry to God its heavenly Father, and get some food, for its hunger is of that impetuous character—it is in season and out of season! And then, it is so impetuous, that the truly hungry soul is like a hungry man, of whom it is said in the proverb, “Hunger breaks through stone walls.” “Oh, it is a wet Sunday!” Ah, but the soul is hungry, and must go, wet or dry. “Yes, but the streets are miry and muddy.” Well, but the soul is hungry, and must go if it is knee-deep in mud! “Yes, but the place is far off.” If it were ten times as far, it must go. “Oh, but there is a closer place.” Yes, but that is the place where they sell philosophic plaster of Paris, and the soul says, “I cannot go to be fed on such stuff as that—I must go where there is milk for babes, and bread for strong men.” And then, they will crowd the place where the bread of heaven is dispensed, and some say, “Why do they crowd the place so?” Oh, if they knew how hungry the people were, they would not wonder! If there were a baker’s shop in the parish, and all the people were starving, you would not marvel if you saw them crowd the door in the morning to get

bread. It has been always so where the Lord sends a true gospel ministry. The Lord never sends bread without sending mouths to eat it! Where the Word is preached, there will be ears to hear, and hearts to receive it. It is no use to try to stop one of these hungry souls—they must have the Word which proceeds out of the mouth of God!

This hunger, I may add, is of an *increasing* character. The longer a man stays the more hungry he gets—his hunger does not decline. Conviction of sin does not grow less and less, but sharper and sharper. Just as hunger gnaws and gnaws the very coats of the stomach, so does this spiritual hunger gnaw into the man's heart! He is wretched beyond expression; his cry grows shriller and more piercing, till he seems as if he would cut through heaven itself, to get at what he wants. "Mercy, Lord, mercy, mercy, mercy!" And you may say to him, "Why do you clamor thus?" His only answer will be, "Mercy, Lord, mercy, mercy! Give me Christ, give me Christ, or else I die!" Now, what is the blessed result of this hunger? Why it makes a man humble! These hungry sinners are never proud; they have not the stomach to play the proud and haughty scorner. souls that are filled with their own good works, and puffed up with their own empty boastings—these high-stomached sinners can boast against Christ and His gospel; but as for these hungry ones, they are willing to *be* anything and to *do* anything so that they may but be saved! *Now* they love to hear the word "*grace*"; there was a time when they could not endure it, but now, they are so hungry, that the word "*grace*" sounds like a bell that summons them to their needed meals. Now, they love to hear of divine sovereignty, they are quite willing that God shall be King, so long as they may be but fed. *Now*, they have no objection to election, if they may but have an interest in the covenant of grace. *Now*, they have no objection to justification by free grace by the righteousness of Christ, for they are

emptied of anything of their own! They are humble, and therefore, they are in a proper state to receive Christ, for, “To this man will I look, and with that man will I dwell; with him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and that trembles at My word.” Blessed hunger! You that do not have it today, may God soon satisfy you; He will do it sooner or later. And you who have had it, though I hope it will never be renewed to you in all its painfulness, yet, I pray that you may always be craving and longing, as new-born babes, desiring the sincere milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby!

2. And this brings me to notice, in the second place, *the heavenly bread and its surpassing excellence*. This bread, you see, is the Word of God. Now, the Word is given to us first here in the Bible, as it is written; it is given to us, secondly, from the lips of God's own chosen and appointed ambassadors. He who despises either of these two, will soon find himself growing lean in spirit. The book, the Word, is like the flour, but, the sermon is the bread, for it is through the sermon that the Word is, as it were, prepared for human palates, and brought so that human souls may be able to receive it. The moment the Church of God shall despise the pulpit, God will despise her. It has been through the ministry that the Lord has always been pleased to revive and bless His Churches, and you will notice, that these revivals in which it was boasted that there were no ministers engaged, have come to nothing before long; for those that stand, are those in which God gets to Himself glory and honor, by using instrumentality. It is a wrong idea altogether, that God is glorified by putting instrumentality aside! That is not His glory. His glory is, that in our infirmity He still triumphs, and that with His own right hand He is able to lay hold upon some jaw-bone of an ass, and yet, slay therewith heaps upon heaps of Philistines! It is the *weakness* of the instrumentality used that has a tendency to glorify God, and hence He very seldom is

pleased to work without some means or other. Most Christians, who have grown rich in grace, have been great frequenters of the house of prayer.

But now, why is it that we need this food at all? Why is it that we need the Word of God? I answer first we need it to *sustain* the life which we have received! When God planted Eden, He did not leave it without watering it, for you read in Genesis, “There went up a mist to water the garden of Eden;” and yet, it is a very strange thing, and you ought to notice, too, that God made the grass of the fields before He bade the sun, moon and stars shine upon the earth, so there was the living thing before there was that upon which it was to depend for its sustenance, to show that He could maintain life without the external means, and that even the grass was not to live by the outward alone, but by the sustaining energy and secret omnipotence of God! Now, if Eden in perfection needed to be watered, much more do we! We are plants of the Lord’s right-hand planting, but like roots in a dry ground, we need the river of God, which is full of water, to flow hard by our roots, and that the dew, which fed upon the Mountains of Hermon, should moisten us every hour, lest like dewless Gilboa, we should be bleak and barren, without any lush greenery to make glad the heart of God or man. As spiritual life depends upon God to give it, so upon God to sustain it! Only He who makes us Christians can keep us so, and hence, the need of divine food. We need this divine food not only to keep us barely alive, but *to make us grow*, and as Peter says, “As new-born babes,” and we need to grow. Now, how shall we grow without food? Supposing it possible to retain life, do we wish always to be babes? Would we always be little children? No, let us pray that we may become young men in Christ, and grow up to the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus! But, how shall this be, unless the Word of God becomes our spiritual food—unless in

hearing it we see Christ, and eat His flesh and drink His blood? You do not expect your children to grow without feeding them, and you must not expect to grow yourself. Besides, this food is necessary *to strengthen us* when we have grown up. A full grown man, though he is a perfect *man*, may still be very imperfect in many matters. He is perfectly a man, but he is still weak. How can we wonder that a man is weak if he does not eat? It is no wonder if Christians find themselves weak in prayer, weak in suffering, weak in action, weak in faith and weak in love, if they neglect to feed upon the Word of God! O souls, there are many among you who are sick, and some who are ready to die, because you have shut your mouths against the bread of heaven, and have gone, day by day, without sitting down at the banqueting table, and feeding upon the marrow and fatness of the promise!

Moreover, we also need to have spiritual food for our joy as well as for our strength. How often do you see a man sad and troubled, who, if he had sufficient sustenance, would soon have sparkling eyes, and a shining face? Many Christians, I do not doubt, are very low and miserable because they do not feed upon the Word of God. If they ate the roll as Ezekiel did, they would soon find it like honey for its sweetness. If we did but lean more upon the breast of Christ, and eat more often from His table, and drink from His cup, our peace would flow like a river, and our righteousness like the waves of the sea! Are you starving your souls? If so, there is no wonder that your joys are dead, and hang their heads like wilted and withered things. I trust, my dear brothers and sisters, many of us know what it is to feed to the full upon the Word of God. And do you not bear me witness that it is *rich* food? There is nothing in the whole world that can so content the spirit as the Word of God! We have read many books; we have listened to the maxims of philosophers; we have gathered up the lessons of experience,

but put them altogether, they are not equal to one text of Scripture! It is said of one Christian, who had spent a great part of his life in translating Livy, that when he came to die, he wished he had spent that time in reading the Word of God. Those who translate the Bible into foreign tongues always say it is a great blessing to them, for instead of growing tired through having to stop long over one word to find out its meaning, they find the word sweeter than before! There is rich food, both in the printed Word and in the spoken Word. Then again, what *plain* food it is! There is nothing like plain food. But, some people come in to listen to the gospel minister, and they say, “Ah, it is not intellectual enough for me!” Such infants would like to live on sponge-cakes, or filthy gingerbread; but, we think the plainer the food, the better! We had rather have it just as it is, without any flavoring or seasoning; just as we find it here. But, while it is plain food, yet, to those who know it, it is very *sweet* food. Though some say, “It is light bread,” as they did in the wilderness, you never loathe this bread. It never palls upon your taste; you are satisfied, and you are even satiated with fatness; but, you are never disgusted through having too much of it. You feel that you would like to swim in a river of such wine as this! You would like to be shut up in a granary of this heavenly corn! You would be but too glad to have nothing else to think upon but Jesus and Him crucified! No other book to read but that Word, no other light to read it by, but the Light of the Spirit, and I think I may add, you would wish to live in no other house but in God’s house, for your desire is, “Lord, evermore give us this bread.”

The Word of God, then, is rich food, but it is plain food, and let us add it is *wholesome* food. The man who feeds on God’s Word will not be puffed up with pride, or sloth, or lust! You may feed on the best of men’s books, and soon grow warped in your judgment, but feed on the pure Word of God, and you

will surely find nothing that is common or unclean in it, but everything that shall make you grow up to be strong men in Christ Jesus!

And then, once more, this food of the Word of God is *abundant* food. Millions live upon it, and there is enough for millions more! We have great appetites sometimes, and we need great promises. Oh, and there are great promises for us—

“What more can He say than to you He has said,
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?”

Our great trials make very great draws upon the treasury, but the treasury never will be emptied for all that! We are great spenders, but bless the Lord, we have great incomes! The great income of the promise is far more than the outgoing of our trials or our afflictions can ever need. There is abundant bread and oh, it is bread that we love! We want no change in it. You have been feeding on it, some of you, these 40 years, and I might turn to some, who have lived on it for 60 years, yet, you do not want any new-fangled doctrines, you want none of the neology of the times, you want the old Word as much as you ever did! And I can say, though I am but a young believer in Christ, that that same gospel note which some 12 years ago made glad these ears, is just as glorious a note as it was then! And I feel as I grow older, a closer attachment to the doctrines of grace, a more complete satisfaction with the written Word, and a more intense delight in telling it forth to the ears of the people!

3. And now, lastly, *a great privilege involving a consequent duty*. We have been made to eat manna, as angels' food which *we did not know*. It was far above our carnal judgments, yet, they who feared the Lord said it was like wafers made with honey. Israel found it to be very sweet, and indeed, it is said by the Rabbis,

that the manna had such a peculiarity about it that it was always the flavor that a man wished it to be. And I think it is very much so with gospel preaching—if a man chooses it to be disagreeable to him, it will be; but, if he desires it to be sweet to him, it will be. He will be sure to be fed if he wants to be fed! For so is it with the precious Book; very much of its flavor is in our own mouths, and when our mouths are out of taste, we think the Bible has lost its savor. But it has not. It is *our mouths* which are to blame, not the Word of God! It is often your ears that are to blame, not the preacher; do not be so quick to blame him, but be a little more rapid in examining yourself.

“Neither did our fathers know.” By nature, however much we may respect them, they are no better than us, and they knew nothing about this subtle, mysteriously generous way by which God supplies the needs of the souls of His people. Well now, if God has given us such food as this, brothers and sisters, I think the least thing we can do is to go and gather it, for when the manna fell, you know, it did not fall into their tents, much less into their mouths! No, it fell round about the camp, so that every man had to get his basket and go forth and gather it. He that gathered much had nothing over; he that gathered little had no lack, but they *all* had to gather it; and, mark, they had to gather it *every day!* They were not, having gathered once, to say, “Now I have all I need,” for it bred worms and stank if they kept it. They must gather it fresh and fresh. Now this is what we ought to do with God’s Word. We ought to read it, and having read it once, we must recollect that what we have read will breed worms unless we go and read again! It is not what we gathered yesterday that will serve for today, we must gather it today; so we must open our Bibles every morning with this prayer—“Give me this day my daily bread.” We must get some choice text to fill our basket—if we read a Chapter we shall have nothing over, if we read a verse we shall have no lack!

Then we put the Word in our memories, and we shall surely find, perhaps not the first hour, but some other hour in the day, that it will taste like wafers made with honey to us. It is astonishing how much a man may know of the Bible by learning a text a day, and how much he may know experimentally, by watching the events of the day, and, interpreting them in the light of the text! If you cannot retain by memory a whole passage, never mind that; take a short text and let it be under your tongue all day, and be looking out for a commentary upon it. I do not mean Matthew Henry, or Scott, or Gill—I mean your own *daily experience*. Be looking out to see how the Lord translates that text to you by His own providence, and you will frequently see a striking relation between the text that was given you in the morning, and the trials or the mercies that are given you during the day! At any rate, let the Word of God be the man of your right hand. Don't become so busy reading magazines, newspapers, and new books, and so forth, that you forget this—this new book, this that is always new and always old always having a freshness in it! Like a well, it is always springing up, not with musty, stale water, but with fresh water that has never sparkled in the sun before, and in all its virgin luster of purity, scatters jewels on the right hand and on the left. Let us go to this fountain and drink fresh and fresh! You will not find the Word of God dropped into your mouth; you must go and gather it outside the tents. Sometimes the Lord will apply a promise without your having read it yourselves, but this is not generally the case. You must dig in this field where lies hidden the pearl of unknown price, and digging there, you shall discover it to your heart's delight!

And then, let us mind also that we are much in the hearing of the Word as well as in the reading of it. Let us, when we come up to the house of God, come there to be fed! Oh, there are many who think that it is mere form to spend a Sunday in

God's house. I do not know but what these are the worst of Sabbath-breakers, after all, for what do they do? They say the table of the Lord is contemptible, and His House is despicable, and they snuff at it and say, "What a weariness it is, what dry dull days Sundays are!" It is not so with the child of God. He comes up to the house of God with this prayer on his heart and on his tongue, "Lord, give Your servant food for my soul today." Beloved, when you are in a right state, you are like birds in the nest—when the mother bird comes with the worm, the babies are all stretching their necks to the food, for they are all hungry and need it. And so should hearers be ready to get hold of the Word, not needing that we should force it down their throat, but waiting there, opening their mouths wide that they may be filled—receiving the Word in the love of it, taking in the Word as the thirsty earth drinks in the rain of heaven! Hungry souls love the Word! Perhaps the speaker may not always put it as they may like to hear it, but as long as it is God's Word, it is enough for them. They are like persons who are sitting at the reading of a will; the lawyer has a squeaking voice, perhaps, or he mispronounces the words, but what of that?—they are listening to see what is left to them. So is it with God's people. It is not the preacher, but the preacher's God that these hungry ones look to! Why, if when you were very poor, some benevolent neighbor should send you a loaf of bread by a man who had a club foot, you would not look at the foot, you would look at the bread! And so is it with the hearers of the Word. They know if they wait until they get a perfect preacher, they will get no preacher at all! But, they are willing to take the man, imperfections and all, provided he brings the Master's bread. And though he is but a lad, and can bring but a few barley loaves and fishes, yet since the Master multiplies the provision, there is enough for all, and they feed to the full!

But, now, I am speaking to some who never feel this hunger. Ah, poor souls, you are all flesh, and you have a fleshly hunger, and, that satisfied, it is enough. Well, remember that it is only spirit that can see the kingdom of God, and as there is no spirit in you, where God is you can never come. If there were that new principle in you—the new nature, the spirit—you would have a spiritual hunger; but the natural man discerns not the things that are of God, and while you are thus merely what you were born, a natural man, without the spirit, you will never hunger after spiritual things, for the flesh shall be satisfied, and that will be enough for you. But, in the next world, your hunger will come and your thirst, too! Scarcely need I remind you of the text, “In hell he lifted up his eyes being in torment, and he said, Father Abraham, send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue.” Better to thirst now than thirst forever! Better to hunger now than to hunger where bread will be denied. Do you feel your need of Christ this morning? Do you confess your sin? Remember, the gate of heaven’s granary is never locked, it is always open! If there is a soul here that desires to be saved, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” To believe on Him is to let Him be for you what you never can be for yourselves, that is—an atonement for your sin by His blood—a Righteousness for your covering by *His* good works! Believe in Him; give yourself up to Him—*trust* Him—be saved according to His way, and His will; and if the Lord has made you willing to be nothing, that Christ may be everything, you are saved! He who brings a man into such a state as that, has brought him into salvation! Trust in Jesus, poor hungry sinner and faith shall feed you to the fullest! Empty though you are, open the mouth of prayer, and stretch out the hands of faith, and He will give you water out of the brook, yes, out of the flinty rock, and with bread from heaven shall He sustain you!

The Lord grant by His grace that we may be among those of whom Christ said, “Blessed are they who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!”

419 THE ROARING LION – I PET. 5:8

A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Morning, November 17th, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brethren in the world.” — I Peter 5:8

SATAN, who is called by various names in the Scriptures, all descriptive of his bad qualities, was once an angel of God, perhaps one of the chief among the fiery ones—

“Foremost of the sons of light,
Midst the bright ones doubly bright.”

Sin, all-destroying sin, which has made an Aceldama out of Eden, soon found inhabitants for hell in heaven itself, plucking one of the brightest stars of the morning from its sphere, and quenching it in blackest night. From that moment, this evil spirit, despairing of all restoration to his former glories and happiness, has sworn perpetual hostility against the God of heaven. He has had the audacity to openly attack the Creator in all His works. He stained creation. He pulled down man from the throne of glory, and rolled him in the mire of depravity. With the trail of the serpent, he despoiled all Eden’s

beauty, and left it a waste that brings forth thorns and briers, a land that must be tilled with the sweat of one's face. Not content with that; inasmuch as he had spoiled the first creation, he has incessantly attempted to despoil the second. Man, once made in the image of God, he soon ruined; now he uses all his devices, all his crafts, all the power of his skill, and all the venom of his malice to destroy twice-made man, created in the image of Christ Jesus, and with ceaseless toil and untiring patience, he is always occupied in endeavoring to crush the seed of the woman! There is no believer in Christ, no follower of that which is true and lovely, and of good repute, who will not find himself, at some season or other, attacked by this foul fiend and the legions enlisted in his service! Now, behold your adversary. Yes, though you cannot see his face, or detect his form, believe that such a foe withstands you! It is not a myth, nor a dream, nor a superstitious imagination. He is as real a being as we are! Though a spirit, he has as much real power over hearts as we have over the hearts of others, no, in many cases far more. This is, I repeat it, no vision of the night; no phantom of a disordered brain! That wicked one is as sternly real this day as when Christ met him in deadly conflict in the wilderness of temptation. Believers now have to fight with Apollyon in the Valley of Humiliation. Woe to the professors of godliness who are defeated by this deadly antagonist! They will find it a terrible reality in the world to come! Against this prince of darkness, we utter afresh this morning the warning of the apostle, "Resist him, steadfast in the faith."

I shall now speak to four points. First of all, *Satan's incessant activity*—"He walks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." Secondly, *we will dwell awhile upon his terrible roaring*; thirdly, *upon his ultimate aim*, seeking to devour God's people; and then, lastly, *let us take up the exhortation of Peter, and show how Satan is to be overcome*.

I. First then, SATAN'S PERPETUAL ACTIVITY.

Only God can be omnipresent; hence, Satan can only be in one place at one time. Yet, if you will consider how much mischief he does, you will easily gather that he must have an awful degree of activity. He is here, and there, and everywhere; tempting us here, and anon scattering his temptations in the countries which are opposite to us; hurrying across the sea or speeding over the land! We have no means of asserting what are his means of flight; but we may easily infer from his being so constantly in all places, that he must travel with inconceivable velocity. He has, besides, a host of fallen spirits who fell with him. This great dragon drew with his tail the third part of the stars of heaven—and these are ready to execute his will, and obey his behests, if not with the same potency and force which belongs by hereditary right to their great leader, still with something of his spirit, his malice, and his cunning.

Think for a while, how active he must be! We know *that he is to be found in every place!* Enter the most hallowed sanctuary, and you shall find him there. Go where men congregate upon the Exchange, and you shall lack no signs of his being present there. Retire into the quietude of the family circle, and you will soon detect in bickerings and jealousies, that Satan has scattered handfuls of evil seed there. No less in the deep solitude of the hermit's cave, might you find the impress of his cloven foot! You shall sail from England to America, and find him there amidst the clashing of swords. You shall come back and journey across the mighty empire of Russia, and find him there in the tyrant's heart, and perhaps, too, even in the enmity which is excited in the breasts of those who are oppressed. You shall go into the wilds where foot of Christian missionary never trod, but you shall find that Satan has penetrated into the far interior, and tutored the untutored barbarian. You shall go where the name of Jesus is as yet unknown, but you shall find

Satan having dominion there. He is the prince of the power of the air. Wherever the breath of life is inhaled, the poisonous fog of temptation is a thing familiar. They who dwell in the wilderness bow before him; the kings of Seba and of Sheba offer him gifts; yes, and the dwellers in the isles acknowledge him too often as their king!

Then, remember, that as he is found in all places, *so you have often found him in all your duties*. You have sought to serve God in your daily avocations, but strong temptations, furious suggestions of evil have followed you there. You have come home from your business almost broken-hearted with your slips. You have come into the family, and sought to magnify your Master in the social circle, but perhaps in the best moment, when you seemed about to achieve the greatest work, you were clipped up by the heels; your easily besetting sin overturned you, and Satan exulted at your fall! You found him even there. You have said, “I will go to my bed,” but in your tossing at midnight, you have found him there. You have risen and said, “I will go into my closet and shut the door;” but who among us has not met the foul fiend even there in solitary conflict? When we wished to be wrestling with the angel of God, we have had to contend with the fiend of hell! Look upon any of your duties, Christian and will you not see upon them marks of sin, and on some, not only marks of sin, but marks of Satan’s presence, too? Satan is not in all sin; we sin of ourselves. We must not lay too much upon Satan’s shoulders. Sin grows in our hearts without any sowing, just as thorns and thistles will grow in fallow furrows; but still there are times when Satan himself must have been present, and you have had to know it and feel it! On some of the old bricks of Egypt and of Babylon there has been found the mark of a dog’s foot. When the brick was made, while it was left to dry, the creature passed over it, and left the imprint of his foot upon it, and now, thousands of years afterwards,

when we pull down the wall we find the dog mark! Thus, has it been often with us. While our duties were in such a state that they were yet impressible; before they were yet sun-burned, and dried, and ready to be built up for real practical purpose, that dog of hell has passed over them, and left the footprint on the best things that we ever did! As we look back years afterwards, we perceive what we might not have seen at the time—that he really marred and stained the best performance of our most willing hands. Ah, when I think how Satan follows us in all places and in all duties, I am sometimes almost ready to apply to him the language of David when he spoke of the omnipresent God—“Where shall I go from Your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from Your presence? If I ascend up into heaven, You are there—if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Your hand lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.” But glory be to God, if I climb to heaven, Satan is not there! There I can escape him! Beyond the reach of his roaring, my spirit shall find her rest in God!

We must also observe *how ready Satan is to vent his spite against us in all frames of heart*. When we are depressed in spirit—perhaps some bodily illness has brought us low, our animal spirits have ebbed and we feel ready to sink, then, that old coward Satan is sure to attack us! I have always noted as a matter of experience, that he prefers rather to attack some of us when we are in a low and weak state than at any other time. Oh, how temptation has staggered us when we have been sick! We have said— “Ah, if this had but come when I was well, then I could have caught it on the shield at once; in fact, I would have laughed at it and broken it in pieces.” But Satan avails himself of our sad and weak frames in order to make his fiery darts find their mark

more effectively. On the other hand, if we are joyous and triumphant, and are something in the frame of mind that David was when he danced before the ark, then Satan knows how to set his traps by tempting us to presumption—"My mountain stands firm, I shall never be moved;" or to carnal security—"Soul, take your ease, you have much goods laid up for many years;" or else to self-righteousness—"My own power and goodness have exalted me." Or else he will even attempt to poison our joys with the spleen of evil forebodings. "Ah," he says, "this is too good to hold; you will soon be cast down, and all these fine plumes of yours shall yet be trod like the mire of the streets." He well knows how, in every frame of mind, to make our condition minister to his devouring purposes! He will follow you, Christian, when your soul is all but despairing, and he will whisper in your ears—"God has forsaken you, and given you over to the will of your enemies." And he will track your upward course, riding as it were on cherub's wings, when you tread the starry pathway of communion! He will dog your footsteps even upon Tabor's summit, and climb with you to Pisgah's brow! On the temple's pinnacle he will tempt you, saying, "Cast yourself down," and on the mountain's highest peak he will attack you with, "Bow down and worship me."

And ah, remember how well he knows *how to turn all the events of providence to our ill*. Here comes Esau, hungry with hunting; there is a mess of pottage ready, that he may be tempted to sell his birthright. Here is Noah, glad to escape from his long confinement in the ark; he is merry and there is the wine-cup ready for him, that he may drink. Here is Peter; his faith is low, but his presumption is high; there is a maiden ready to say—"You also were with Jesus of Nazareth." There is Judas, and there are 30 pieces of silver in the priestly hands to tempt him, yes, and there is the rope afterwards for him to hang himself with! No lack of means! If there is a Jonah, wishing to

go to Tarshish rather than to Nineveh, there is a ship ready to take him. Satan has his providences as if to counterfeit the providence of God! At least he knows how to use God's providence to serve his own ends. One of the greatest mercies God bestows upon us is His not permitting our inclinations and opportunities to meet. Have you not sometimes noticed that when you had had the inclination to a sin there has been no opportunity—and when the opportunity has presented itself, you have had no inclination towards it? Satan's principal aim with believers is to bring their appetites and his temptations together; to get their souls into a dry, seared state, and then to strike the match, and make them burn! He is so crafty and wily with all the experience of these many centuries, that man, who is but of yesterday, can scarcely be thought of as a match for him. Did he not drag down the wise man, even Solomon, whose wisdom was more excellent than any of the sons of men? Did he not lay the Royal Preacher like a helpless victim at his feet? Did he not cast down the strong man, Samson—who could slay a thousand Philistines, but who could not resist the dallying of Delilah? Did he not bring down even the man after God's own heart by a most sorrowful fault? Let us sorrowfully remember that we have hardly met with a perfect and an upright man against whom Satan has not vented his spleen, and over whom Satan has not, in some degree, triumphed.

Well, I have thus spoken of Satan's terrible activity; of his following us into all places, and attending us wherever we may go. I am sure that no Christian heart here thinks this to be a mere trifle. Of course, there are skeptics. There are some who will not believe in the existence of this evil spirit. Too, generally, I have noticed that when a man has no devil, he has no God! Usually when a man does not believe there is a devil, it is because he never experiences his attacks, and probably never will, for the devil does not take the trouble to go and look after

those he is sure of! “Oh, no,” he says, “let them take their ease; I do not need to tempt them.” But I say this, if a man has ever met Satan, as John Bunyan describes Christian meeting Apollyon in the Valley of Humiliation, he will have no doubt of the existence of a devil! When I have stood foot to foot with that arch-tempter in some dire hour of conflict, I could no more doubt his being there struggling and wrestling with my soul, than a soldier who has been cut, and scarred, and wounded, while bleeding and faint, doubt that there must have been an antagonist to inflict those wounds! Experience will be to man, after all, the best proof of this, and we cannot expect that those who have never known the joys of the Holy Spirit will know much about the attacks of the Evil Spirit; nor that those who doubt that there is a God, can ever be much tormented with the devil. “Oh,” says Satan, “let them alone, they will fall into the ditch of themselves! There is no need that I should go abroad after them.” I think I remember telling you of Mr. Beecher’s illustration. When the Negro went out with his master to catch wild ducks, one of the ducks being a little wounded, the master made the most desperate efforts to get it, but he observed that when it was dead and had fallen down, his master did not bother much about it because he could pick it up at any time. And so it is with dead souls. The devil can pick them up at any time! It is those that are wounded, that have some life left, that he is afraid of losing. Such as these, he is sure to pursue; he will be always striving to get them safe in his grasp.

II. And now, we turn, secondly, to **SATAN’S ROARING.**

The destroyer has many ways of mischief. Here in the text he is compared to a *roaring* lion. In some passages of Scripture, you will remember he is compared to a fowler. Now a fowler makes no noise. It would altogether defeat his end if he were to frighten the birds; but as quietly as possible he sets his trap,

and with sweet notes, he seeks to enchant his victim till it is taken in the trap. That is quite a different thing from the roaring lion of the text! In another passage, it is said that he knows how to transform himself into an angel of light; and then, plausibly and smoothly, he teaches false doctrine and error, and all the while appears to have a holy zeal for truth, and the most earnest love for that which is delicate and lovely, and of good repute. We have plenty of specimens in these days of the devil teaching morality. You sometimes take up a newspaper of the skeptic or scorpion school, whose writers hate all true religion as much as the devil hates virtue, and you find a most backhanded article upon the indelicacies of some honest preacher, or a very pious lamentation over the presumed follies of an earnest minister. Never let the devil accuse Christians of insincerity and hypocrisy again, let him find his answer in his own dear allies who can plead for the sanctity of places which they abhor, and for a solemnity which they despise. Of all devils, the most devilish is the saintly hypocrite loving sin, and yet pleading against it in order to promote it! In this text, however, he is not an angel of light, but a roaring lion. I think it was Rutherford who said that he liked the devil best in this shape. I remember in one of his letters he thanks God that He had given him a *roaring* devil to deal with. Now, what is the peculiar temptation which is intended under the metaphor of a roaring lion? Again, we repeat it—not the slouching gait of a prowling lion who is seeking after its prey, and will only roar when it is ready to lunge; but a lion that roars till he makes the very forest startle, and shakes the hills, which gird the prairie!

These roars of Satan are threefold. Perhaps Peter here alluded to *the roaring of persecution*. How Satan roared with persecutions in Peter's days! He roared, and roared, and roared again, till none but stout hearts dared to show themselves valiant for Christ. There were the underground prisons filled

with frogs, and serpents, and toads, where breath or fresh air never chased away the noxious smell, and pestilential vapor. There were racks and gallows; there was the sword for beheading, and the stake for burning; there was dragging at the heels of the wild horses; there was smearing over with pitch, and then setting on fire the body still alive to burn in Nero's garden. There were torments which must not be described, the very pictures of which are enough to make one's eyes weep blood as you look upon them! There was nothing for the Christian then but banishment and imprisonment—these were the lowest penalties. "They were stoned, they were sawn in sunder, they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, and tormented." These were the roaring of the lion in good Peter's day! Since then, from his old den at Rome, what roaring has Satan given forth, like thunders indeed to all except the men who knew the difference between the mimic thunders of hell, and the real thunder of the God of heaven! Let Smithfield testify to the roaring of this lion! Let our cemeteries and graveyards which still bear the memorial of our myriad martyrs, testify how the lion has roared at us! And let our denomination especially, persecuted alike by Protestant and Romanist, hunted both by good and bad upon the face of the earth—let the thousands who have been drowned in the rivers of Holland and Germany—let the multitudes who have there been put to the most exquisite torture merely because they would hold God's holy ordinance, and would not prostitute it at the will of the Pope or prelate—let all these speak and tell how Satan has roared in days of old! He has not half the roar in him now that he had then! Why, he can do nothing at all against us! His roars now-a-days are like the hissings of some angry cat. All he can do is but to use cruel mocking; now and then a wicked slander, or a jeer, or a caricature, or a witty sentence! What are these? Oh, if we cannot bear these, what

would we have done when the lion used to roar in real lion-like style? Well, well, he may growl again yet, before some of us have gone off the face of the earth, for we know not what may happen. But let him roar; we know, blessed be God that He who is for us, is more than all they that are against us!

But, there is another kind of furious attack, *the roaring of strong and vehement temptation*. Some of us have felt this. Do you know what it is, Christian—I hope you do not—do you know what it is sometimes to be caught hold of by the clutch of some frightful temptation which you hate, loathe, detest, and abominate? And yet, the clutch of the hand is seconded by an arm so terrific in its strength, that it drags you right on against your will! You look at the sin, look it in the very face; you feel you cannot do this great wickedness and sin against God, and yet, the impulse, strong and stern, mysterious and irresistible, drags you on till you come to the edge of the precipice, and look down upon the yawning gulf which threatens to swallow you up! And in the last moment, by God's grace, as by the very skin of your teeth, you are delivered, and your foot does not slip, neither do you fall into the hand of the destroyer. You have had reason to say—"My steps had almost gone; my feet had well-near slipped." Have you known what it is to have this temptation come again, and again, and again, till you were in agony? You felt that you had rather die than thus be perpetually assaulted, for you feared that in an evil hour you might leave your God, and turn unto perdition. You have been like good Mr. Stand-Fast in Bunyan's *Pilgrim*, when tempted by Madam Bubble; he fell at last down upon his knees, and with sighs, and cries to God, he begged Him to deliver him, and He who comes to the help of the feeble, at last delivered His servant! Have you ever known this? This is one of Satan's roars at you, thrusting his temptation against you like the torments to which they put some of the early martyrs, when they laid them down and

poured filthy water down their throats in such immense quantities that they were at last killed! Though they loathed the filthy liquid, yet their enemies continued to pour on and on. So has Satan done with us, pouring down his filth, cramming us with his mire, compelling us as much as possible to yield to temptation. My peculiar temptation has been constant unbelief. I know that God's promise is true, and that He that said it will do it. He that has performed of old, changes not, and will be firm and faithful even to the end. Yet, does this temptation incessantly assail me—"Doubt Him. Distrust Him. He will yet leave you." I can assure you when that temptation is aided by a nervous state of mind, it is very hard to stand day by day, and say, "No, I cannot doubt my God! He that has been with me in days gone by is with me still; He will not forsake His servant, nor put him away." That perpetual assaulting, that perpetual stabbing, and cutting, and hacking at one's faith is not so easy to endure! O God, deliver us, we pray You, and make us more than conquerors by Your Spirit's power!

Once more, Satan has another way of roaring. I do not suppose that one in ten of God's people knows anything about this—and they need not wish to—Satan can *roar also in the Christian's ears with blasphemies*. I do not allude now to those evil thoughts which spring up in the minds of men who, in their childhood, and their early youth, went far into sin. I know that you will sometimes, when in prayer, be troubled with the snatch of an old song which you once used to sing; and perhaps, when you would be most free from every unhallowed thought, some coarse expression which you heard in your former haunts will return again, and again, and again. Why the verse of a hymn may suggest to you some unholy thing, or a text of Scripture bring up some of those old recollections which you have longed to forget! But, I allude now more especially to those yet more ferocious attacks of Satan when he will inject

blasphemous thoughts into the minds of believers who never thought such things before. You know how Bunyan describes it. “Good Christian had to pass through the valley of the shadow of death. About the midst of this valley, he perceived the mouth of hell to be—and just when he was come over against the mouth of the pit of hell, one of the wicked ones got behind him, and stepped up softly to him, and whisperingly suggested many grievous blasphemies to him which he verily thought had proceeded from his own mind! This shook up Christian more than anything he had met with before, even to think that now he should blaspheme Him who he so much loved before! Yet, if he could have helped it, he would not have done it. But he had not the discretion either to stop his ears, or to know from where those blasphemies came.” Seldom does the ministry allude to these matters; but, inasmuch as they trouble some of the people of God, I believe it to be the duty of a faithful shepherd of the flock, to minister to those who are called to pass through this dark and dismal state. Oh, the horrors and terrors which Satan has sometimes caused God’s people, by the thoughts that were not theirs, but proceeded from himself, or from some of his fiends! First, he suggested the thought so vividly that they cried with David—“Horror has taken hold of me, because of the wicked who keep not Your law.” And then, when the thought had flashed for a moment upon the soul, he gave a second horror by saying, “Ah, you are not a child of God, or you would not have so vile a nature.” Whereas, you never thought it at all! It was *his* suggestion, not yours; and then, having laid his sin at your door, he has turned accuser of the brethren, and has sought to cast down your faith from its excellence by making you imagine that you had committed the unpardonable sin! Now, if he roars against you, either with persecution, or with temptation, or with diabolical insinuations, take the language of our apostle here—“Resist

him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.”

III. I now turn to my third point which is **SATAN’S ULTIMATE AIM**—“Seeking whom he may devour.”

Nothing short of the total destruction of a believer will ever satisfy our adversary. Nothing less than the perfection, and complete Salvation of a Christian, is the heart’s desire of our Savior; He will never see the full fruition of the travail of His soul till all His people are completely saved! The reverse is true of Satan. He can never be content till he sees the believer utterly devoured. He would tear him in pieces, and break his bones, and utterly destroy him if he could. Do not, therefore, indulge the thought that the main purpose of Satan is to make you miserable. He is pleased with that, but that is not his ultimate end. Sometimes he may even make you happy, for he has dainty poisons sweet to the taste which he administers to God’s people. If he feels that our destruction can be more readily achieved by sweets than by bitters, he certainly would prefer that which would best effect his end—

“More the treacherous calm I dread
Than tempests rolling overhead,”

said Toplady. And much in the same spirit said a Puritan divine of old—“There is no temptation so hard to bear, as not being tempted at all.” Indeed, it is a stern temptation to be left at ease! When we think we have no occasion for our sword, we begin to unbuckle it from our side; we strip off our armor piece by piece, and then it is that we become most exposed to the attack of our enemies. Satan will be glad enough, no doubt, to see your faith weakened, but his aim is to *destroy* that faith so that you may not believe in God to the saving of your soul! He will be pleased enough if he can throw mire into the eyes of

your hope, so that you can no more look to the goodly land that is beyond Jordan; but he will never be satisfied till he puts those eyes out altogether, and sends you, like Samson, to grind at the mill! Let us take this for our comfort; if it is Satan's desire that we may be utterly destroyed, in that, at least, he is certain to be defeated! When it comes to a question who shall have the victory, Christ, the Eternal Son of God, or Satan, the prince of the power of the air, we need have no doubt as to which shall succeed! The devil is but a *creature*, finite in his nature, and limits are laid upon his prowess. If the battle were between Satan and man, then indeed woe the day to us! We might quit ourselves like men, and be strong, but before this giant, all the host of Israel must flee. *But the battle is not ours.* It is the mighty God's! He who once broke this serpent's head, still wages war with him! Yes, and Christ Himself must be defeated, the glory of His cross must be dimmed; His arm must be broken, the crown of sovereignty must be snatched from His head, and His throne must reel beneath Him, before one of those for whom He died, and on whom He set his Love, should ever be cast away or be given up to the power of His adversary! In this, then, tried believer, count it your joy that Satan may worry, but he cannot rend! He may wound, but he cannot kill! He may get his foot upon you to make a full end of you, but you shall yet start up with fresh strength, and say, "Rejoice not against me, O my enemy—when I fall, I shall arise. When I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me."

IV. With the fourth point, we now draw to a close—**WHAT WE SHOULD DO IN ORDER THAT WE MAY OVERCOME THIS ADVERSARY?**

"Resist him, steadfast in the faith." This is our first means of defense. When Satan attacks us as an angel of light, we need not so much resist by open antagonism as by flight. There are some temptations which are only to be overcome by running

away from them, but when Satan roars, we must raise the shout and the war cry. To run *then* would be cowardice, and would entail certain destruction. Suppose now that Satan roars with *persecution*, (and it is a poor roar that he can raise in that way now)! Or, suppose you are slandered, vilified, abused—will you give way? Then, are you undone! Will you say, “No, never, by Him who called me to this work, I will see this battle out, and in the name of Him who has been my helper up to now, I set up the banner; and I cry—Jehovah-Nissi; the Lord of hosts is our banner, the God of Jacob is our refuge.” You have done well; you have resisted, and you will win the day! Has he assailed you with some temptation obnoxious to your spirit? Yield an inch, and you are undone, but become more watchful and more vigilant over yourself in that particular sin, and resistance must certainly bring victory. Or has he injected blasphemy? Resist! Be more prayerful every time he is more active. He will soon give it up if he finds that his attacks drive you to Christ! Often has Satan been nothing but a big black dog to drive Christ’s sheep nearer to the Master! Often has he been like a tremendous crested billow which has just lifted the poor shipwrecked mariner on to the rock, and from very fear has made him cling the more tightly there! If he thrusts you thus, match him by turning even his temptations to good account, and he will soon give up that mode of warfare, and exchange it for another.

Resist him! But how? “Steadfast in the faith”; seek to obtain a clear knowledge of the doctrines of the gospel, and then get a good grip of them. Be ready to die sooner than give up a particle of God’s revealed truth. This will make you strong. Then, take hold of the promises of God which are Yes and Amen in Christ Jesus. Know that to every doctrine, there is some opposite promise. Have ready for every attack some strong word commencing with, “Is it written?” Answer Satan

with, “Thus says the Lord”—“Steadfast in the faith.” Remember all the water outside of a ship cannot sink it. It is the water *inside* that endangers its safety. So, if your faith can keep its hold, and you can still say, “Though He slays me yet will I trust in Him,” Satan may batter your shield; but he has not wounded your flesh—

“Amidst temptations sharp and long,
My soul to this dear refuge flies;
Hope is my anchor, firm and strong,
While tempests blow and billows rise.
The gospel bears my spirits up;
A faithful and unchanging God
Lays the foundation for my hope,
In oaths, and promises, and blood.”

The conflict may be long, but the victory is *absolutely sure*. Oh poor soul! Do but keep near to the cross, and you are safe. Throw your arms around the dying Savior. Let the drops of His blood fall on your sins, and even if you cannot see Him, still believe Him! Still say, “I know that He came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief, and I will cling to the sinner’s Savior as my only hope and trust.” Then, let Satan roar, he cannot hurt; let him rage, his fury is in vain; he may but show his teeth, for he certainly cannot bite! “Resist him, steadfast in the faith.”

But, there is another word added for our comfort—“Knowing that the same afflictions are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.” This is well sketched by John Bunyan in that picture I have already alluded to, in the Valley of the Shadow of Death. “As Christian was going along the exceedingly narrow pathway, with a deep ditch on one side, and a dangerous quagmire upon the other, he came to a stand, and

he had half a thought to go back; and then again, he thought he might be half-way through the valley, so he resolved to go on. And while he pondered and mused, he heard the voice of a man as going before him, saying, 'Yes, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me.' Then he was glad and that for these reasons. He gathered from thence that some who feared God were in this valley as well as he was; that God was with them, though they perceived Him not; that he hoped to have company, by-and-by. So he went on and called to him that was before, but he knew not what to answer for that he also thought himself to be alone." Here honest John has our experience to the life. It is likely enough that as I am speaking this morning, some of you will say, "I did not think that anybody ever felt as I feel." And though I tell you these things, and know that many of you have heard Satan roar, I am compelled to confess that I have frequently said in my own heart, "I do not believe that any other man ever had this temptation before me." Well, this text stands to refute our supposition, "The same afflictions are experienced by your brotherhood in the world." Martin Luther was known to say, that next to Holy Scripture, the best teacher for a minister was *temptation*; he put affliction next, but temptation he kept first in his view. When we have been tempted and tried ourselves, we know how to succor others. I grant you it is hard to have the conviction on one's mind that you are standing in a perilous place where never man stood before, and tempted as never man was tempted before you! Come, believer, we will talk this matter over for two or three seconds. Certainly your Lord has been there before, for He was tempted in all points like as you are. Scripture says that all your brethren have had some participation in your trials. Now mark, as they suffered as you suffer, no temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man. As they came through the

temptation safe and unharmed, so shall you. As they testified that their light afflictions worked out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, so that shall be your testimony! As they have overcome and now circle the throne of God clothed in pure white garments, so will you! And inasmuch as their temptations have left no tears upon their brow, no stains upon their robes, no tear in their royal mantles, so neither shall Satan be able to disfigure or to mutilate you, but you shall come out of every trial, and of every struggle, losing nothing therein save that which it is well to lose—your dross and your tin, your chaff and your bran! You shall come forth from the deep waters washed, cleansed and purified. God grant that so it may be with you, but it can only be so by your resisting Satan, steadfast in the faith.

And now, I am addressing some this morning whom the precept does not reach, for they have no faith in which to stand fast. If you knew what a blessed thing it is to be a Christian, you would weep your eyes out that you are not Christians yourselves. “Oh,” you say, “but you have described to us the temptations of Satan.” Just so, but it is a blessed thing to be a Christian in his very worst state. As I look sometimes upon those pictures which are drawn by the artist to illustrate the *Pilgrim's Progress*, even when I have seen poor John up to his neck in the mire, I have thought I would sooner be Christian in the Slough of Despond, than Pliable on the dry land on the other side! I would sooner be Christian when the dragon hurled all his darts at him, though he smiled not all the day long—sooner be Christian then, than be Hypocrisy or Formality climbing over the wall to go by some other way! It is a good thing to be a Christian even in his very worst state, and what must it be in his best? Young men and young women, as one of your own age, I bear my testimony that to follow Christ is

the most blessed and pleasant thing, even in this present evil world—

“I would not change my blessed estate
For all the world calls good or great;
And while my faith can keep her hold,
I envy not the sinner’s gold.”

But who am I, that I should say this? Why nothing but a poor miserable sinner who looks for all in Christ! With nothing in my hand, I simply cling to His cross. Nor am I an inch forwarder than I was 12 years ago in this respect. My cry then was, “None but Jesus, none but Jesus,” and it is my cry now, and shall be my cry even to the end! And what are you today but a lost, guilty sinner? But do not despair. Trust Jesus! Trust Jesus!—and the joys and privileges of the Christian are yours! Now, this moment, cast yourself on Him. Look to His agony and bloody sweat, His cross, His passion, His death, His burial, His resurrection, His ascension, and you shall find a balm for every fear, a cordial for every distress! All that you need, and all that your heart can ever desire is most surely to be found in Christ Jesus your Lord!

May God grant us to be partakers of that grace which is in His most blessed name, that we may not be destroyed by the destroyer!

420 ABRAM AND THE RAVENOUS BIRDS –
GEN. 15:11

A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Morning, November 24th, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

**“And when the vultures came down upon the carcasses,
Abram drove them away.” — Genesis 15:11**

WE MIGHT USE this text, if we chose, as a picture of the ease with which faith repels all attacks that are made upon Christ, the great sacrifice of the new covenant. Ainsworth tells us that the original word which we translate “drove” has in it the force of “puffed” them away; as if with a very puff of breath these vultures were at once driven away from the bodies of the victims. Faith knows how, when skeptical and blaspheming vultures, when speculative eagles come down to attack the sacrifice of Christ, to chase them away with but a puff of her breath! “We *know* whom we have believed.” Let the earth shake, our confidence in Him cannot move! He is to us as real a person as ourselves; no, we might doubt our own existence, but Jesus, His power, His love, His precious blood, His prevalent atonement, we dare not doubt. One puff of the breath of prayer, and questions and taunts are gone; one puff of the breath of holy faith in praise, and every skeptical attack is scattered to the winds, as far as we are concerned. When these vultures come down upon the body of Christ, like Abram, by faith we “puff” them away!

But, I do not intend to use the text with such an objective this morning, though one might legitimately do so. It seems to me to represent to us our duty when distracting thoughts invade the sanctity of our holy worship. Here is Abram; he has killed the victims according to divine order; he has laid them in their places according to heavenly rule; he is waiting until God shall over those victims make and ratify the covenant; but meanwhile the buzzards and vultures scent the bodies from afar, and hasten to devour the flesh of the bullock and the ram. Abram chases them away, that so, his sacrifice may not be spoiled, and he may have real fellowship with God. Brothers and sisters, we never attempt to worship God without finding many difficulties in the way—

“What various hindrances we meet,
In coming to the mercy seat!”

We in our assemblies are like the angels in theirs—“When the sons of God came together, Satan came also among them.” We find that wherever we may be, and in whatever frame of mind or with whatever earnestness we may attempt to worship God, there always is a servant with us who must be told to stay at the foot of the mountain, while we go and worship God. If not, our offerings will not be profitable to ourselves, nor acceptable before God.

I shall attempt, this morning, in dealing with this subject, first to *enumerate some of those foul birds which come upon our sacrifice*; secondly, to show *the necessity in driving them away*; and thirdly, *how we are to do it*.

I. First then, LET US MENTION SOME OF THOSE WELL-KNOWN INTRUDERS WHICH ARE PERPETUALLY MOLESTING OUR PEACE AND DISTURBING OUR SERVICE.

First, there are *wicked thoughts—the sons of Satan*. These respect no sacred places. The sanctity of our closet has been violated with thoughts of lust; the dignity of the mercy seat has not sufficed to repress the vile insinuations of blasphemy! Wickedness, though it *dwells* no more in the heart of the believer, yet seeks to find a lodging there, and well does it effect its purpose at times, for it tarries like a wayfaring man for a night, lingering there sufficiently long to mar our devotion, and to prevent our having joy in fellowship with God! Have you not found these thoughts intruding into your house, and on the Sabbath have not unhallowed things vexed you? In the sanctuary of God itself, have you not found the sons of Belial still tormenting you? You would sing God's praise; perhaps a snatch of some unholy song suggests itself. You would pray unto God; but in your very access to the mercy seat, you meet some fiend-like doubt. You would listen to the voice of God with all attention, but wicked temptations distract you; and you would thank God with all your soul, but folly comes in to shut your mouth and prevent your praise. The very best of the saints need to hold up their shield to keep off the fiery darts of Satan! Upon the best ground that was ever plowed with the gospel plow, Satan will scatter the worst seed; tares will come up in God's most fruitful field; there *will* be spots, even in our solemn feasts; there *will* be these birds upon our most hallowed sacrifices! But we must resolutely resist these harpies; these evil ones are not to be allowed at any time, but much less in the service of God. We must guard against them at all times and in all seasons, but, much more, when we stand in the presence of Him who says, "Put off your shoes from off your feet, for the place whereon you stand is holy ground."

In company with these foul vultures, fly those ravenous birds called *worldly thoughts*, which *spring from the force of habit*. The wheels have been running the last six days in this direction; it

is not quite so easy to reverse the action, and to make them go the other way. We have been sinking, sinking, sinking in the miry clay of daily business; it is not very easy for the soul that lies cleaving to the dust, to rise at once towards heaven! It is no wonder, when you have so many things to think of in this age of competition, that the ledger should lie there in front of the pew instead of the Bible, and, that at times, the daybook should come in when your hand holds the hymnbook, or that you should be thinking of a bad debt, or of a long account which is rather precarious, instead of meditating upon the faithfulness of God, and of pardons bought with blood. These traffickers molest the very Temple, and we have not always the scourge of small cords to drive them out, nor the commanding presence of the Savior, to say, "Take these things hence, it is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves." How many a mother comes here with all her tribe of children on her shoulders? How many a father comes here with thoughts of where he shall apprentice his eldest son, or what shall become of his younger daughter? How many a merchant comes in, and every wind that makes the windowpanes rattle reminds him of his ships at sea; how many a farmer is thinking of his land and the fitful gleams of sunshine and returning showers make him remember his cattle and his crops? Shops and stalls, bushels and scales, silks and cottons, horses and cows, and even meaner things intrude into Your house, O King of kings!

Brothers and sisters, how often do some of you indulge in them? I hope there are none of you who keep your account books on Sunday, and yet how common is this in London! There are some who shut up their shop in front, and keep it open at the back, as if they would serve the devil and cheat the Lord! If you register your ledgers on Sunday, why not open your shop? You might as well be in the shop as in the country

house, for the sin is just the same; only you now add hypocrisy to it, by pretending to serve God when you do not! Yet how many there are, true believers in Christ, who would scorn to look at the ledger on Sunday, and yet their mind is hampered with accounts, and debtor and creditor will be striking balances continually in their brain! Some professors on the Sabbath afternoon will be talking about the state of the markets, and asking, “What do you think of the rise and fall of Consols?” “When will this terrible American war be over?” “When is it likely the Manchester factories will obtain full employment by the arrival of ship loads of cotton,” or “How will Louis Napoleon pay his debts?” When they come up to the house of God in the evening, they wonder how it is they do not get on with the preacher! The preacher might wonder how he could be of any service to such hearers! They wonder that the Sabbath is not refreshment to them; but, how is it likely to be when they still continue in their worldly employments, really giving their hearts to the world, though they profess to give their bodily presence to the service of Christ?

Besides wicked and worldly thoughts, another set of ravens will be croaking over us. I mean *anxious thoughts which are the fruits of our unbelief*. “Oh,” says one, “how can I help it? If you knew my condition in business, you would not marvel that care *will* come in today; loss after loss, continually going backward, though with energy and perseverance I seek to make progress; a large family—a once extensive connection—the constant fear of ruin—how *can* I hope to chase away anxious thoughts, and bothersome cares on the day of rest?” My brother, I make many excuses for you; but while I make all excuses, let me remind you that it is written, “Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.” At least today there is no need that you should carry that burden! Why, it will be none the worse for this one day’s letting alone, and it certainly will be none the

better for this blessed day being wasted in fretting and worrying yourself. What if the burden is heavy? Is it not enough to carry it six days? Why do you need to carry it on the seventh? What if the toil is severe—and we will allow that it is—is not that the more reason why you should shorten the hours of your labor, and not give the whole seven days to it, but on this day, pour out your heart before God, empty out your troubles at His feet, and leave in His hands your difficulties and your trials, believing that He knows them all, and knows how to make them all work for your good? These bothersome cares must be chased away, just as much as wicked thoughts, for “after all these things do the Gentiles seek.”

But, sometimes in our prayers, and in our Sabbath worship, we are disturbed by those carrion crows called *annoying thoughts, the offspring of our vanity*. I will just mention some of them that you will think, perhaps, rather odd; but I have no doubt you know them. We have known, sometimes, a sister come to worship and she notices—“Why, Mrs. So-and-So is dressed differently from what she was last Sunday, and she had a new bonnet the Sunday before!” O silly soul, to be allured like a butterfly with colors and flowers! Then, look at yonder brother; there is So-and-So, sitting in the opposite gallery, which he did not want to see today, at any rate, for he does not like the man, and he feels that his very presence is a detriment and a drawback to the possibility of devotion. Or, perhaps, my brothers and sisters, as you came in, there was some little mistake at the door; or when our friend got to the pew, he found it occupied by somebody else; or, he is not occupying just the door-seat where he likes to sit; or, perhaps, he is standing in an inconvenient place. You know these are all trifles, complete trifles, the most despicable of things; but how many there are, that irritate themselves about them? And why? Because they have so high an opinion of their own dignity, that

they think these little things ought not to be endured by them! No, sir, the aisle should be carpeted up which you walk; there should be an air cushion always provided, gratis, for you; there should be ushers with no other purpose, but to show *you* into the seat, and when you are there, every objectionable person in the congregation should be removed, and everything should be done for your personal comfort! You say, “No, I am not so foolish as that.” I do not know that, my dear sir; there is the germ of it in most of us! We want so many of these little favors, and if we are not duly honored, we cannot worship in comfort. The thought of seeing God, and enjoying the light of His countenance, has not sufficient power over the carnal hearts of some, to make them forget all the little inconveniences that must occur in vast assemblies, and in a great house like this in which we are gathered! There are some fret-tempered souls that cannot worship, because some trifle not worth a moment’s notice has disturbed their minds. Now, these feelings must be striven against; this vanity is not to be allowed in any one of us. We must denounce it, and chase it out, for it only makes us little in the esteem of others. And if we could but see ourselves, it would make us contemptible in our own sight! Oh, bless His name, when a soul is hungry, it little matters how it gets its food; when a heart is really set on finding Christ, the man will care but little what may be his comfort or his discomfort! Only, let the truth of Jesus come into the soul, let him feed on its marrow and its fatness, and he will say, “I would rather be doorkeeper” (and that is a very objectionable office for anybody—if any of you tried it you would find it very inconvenient to worship God after having kept the door of the Tabernacle). “I would rather be a door-keeper in the house of God, than dwell with comfort and with ease, in the tents of the wicked.”

But, I will mention a brood of eagles which will haunt Mount Zion—I mean *ecclesiastical anxieties*. And what do I mean

by these? Why, that sometimes when our minds should be perfectly free for worshipping God, church business, perhaps church differences, thrust themselves upon us! The deacon thinks he may worry himself a little about something that has occurred with the poor; the elder thinks it would be justifiable to be thinking over the case of such-and-such a refractory individual whose case has troubled him; the member thinks he may be fretting about the dullness of the minister; the minister thinks he may be groaning because some in the galleries have not joined the church; and mark, all these are good things in their places, but they have no business at all with us when we come up to God's house to worship Him. Then, these birds, even though they are like the sparrows that build under the eaves of the altar, must be driven away; for, until we can get rid of them all, we shall not find the day of rest such as it should be, nor will our worship be acceptable before the throne of God, nor shall our own souls derive the joy they ought to have from the service and presence of the Lord.

Probably in this description I have not yet touched your case, but I will not try again, for I think you can yourself remember many things which haunt you. Many a ship has been built here without a dry dock; many a wagonload of corn has been sold here without a sample bag; many a broad acre has been planted in this chapel; many a hundred head of oxen has been sold here; many a loom has been set agoing; many a vessel has been navigated; many a new shop front constructed, and many a building erected, when you might have been worshipping God; for in all our worship, there are those who will be sending their minds gadding abroad over mountains of vanity, when they ought to be sitting still, to see and to understand the salvation of God!

II. I have described the birds; I have indicated the intruders; I have raised the hue and cry against them; let me now seek to **STIR YOU UP TO CHASE THEM AWAY.**

Distracting cares must be driven away, first, *for your own sake.* Brothers and sisters, some of us have been alarmed to see how the lunatic asylums are everywhere needing new wings, and the number of inmates so rapidly increasing. If there is one reason above all others for this, I venture to assert it is the neglect of the Sabbath! No human brain can bear the perpetual toils of business, except it knows how to pause and oil the machinery by turning the mind in some other direction. Here we have merchants whose brains are exercised from the time they rise, till the time they go to rest, yes, and their very dreams are disturbed by great schemes and plans! And then, when the first day of the week comes, they are still scheming. Instead of pulling up, and letting the horses of the mind take a rest so that they may start afresh in the chariot on the next week-day, it is on, on, on, on, and then, they wonder that the poor creatures at last flag with weariness, or even drop dead upon the road! Flog them as you will, your minds cannot keep always at this stretch! We, whose hardest toil is on this day, and who find that the great cares of a church so large as this will follow us to our bed, and that all the days of the week we are occupied thereby, find it to be one of our sternest trials to resist the fear that our reason may reel. It is too hard for any man, even for the minister of God, to be always thinking, always working, even though that work is for God Himself. You know what Solomon says. He says—"If the iron is blunt, and he does not whet the edge, then must he have more strength—but wisdom is profitable to direct." By which he means to say, if the man would stop and whet his tool, it would be sharp, and he would not need to expend half the strength, and he would do far more work. But here, you have some who think the Sunday must be

all work, work, work; instead of which, if they were to stop to whet the edge of the tool, they would do far more in the end, while their soul would not be half so soon worn out! You have heard persons say, “I would sooner wear out than rust out.” There is no occasion for either, if we would but keep this day of rest as a perfect rest to our heart and soul; but that we can never do unless we love Christ, for a Sabbath is impossible to an unconverted man! If we would but, as Christians resting in Christ, keep this first day of rest, giving our souls thorough ease, there would be no fear of the brain giving way. We would labor on, even to a good old age, and then die in peace, and our works would follow us. I cannot expect you to believe me if I should say, you can carry on your business all the days of the week without care, without diligence, without very earnest thought. We must be “diligent in business,” and you must put both your hands to the wheel if you would make it go! But do leave the wheel alone today. Now, have done with it. You will madden yourself, or, if it comes not to so sad a climax as that, you will destroy your comfort, destroy the acuteness of your mental powers, if you do not give them rest today. *I am no preacher of the old legal Sabbath*; those who are teachers of the law insist upon that quite enough. As for me, I am a preacher of the gospel, and rejoice that believers are not “under the law, but under grace.” A worldling is under the law, and it is his duty to remember the *seventh* day, to keep it holy, for so runs the law which is his taskmaster! But I am not under the law, and therefore I keep *this* day—not the seventh, but the *first* day of the week, on which my Savior rose again from the dead—keep it not of law, but of grace—keep it not as a slavish bondage, not as a day on which I am chained and hampered with restraints against my will, but I keep it as a day in which I may take holy pleasure in serving God, and in adoring before His throne! The Sabbath of the Jew is to him a task; the Lord’s-Day

of the Christian, the first day of the week, is to him a joy, a day of rest, of peace and of thanksgiving. And, if you Christians can earnestly drive away all distractions, so that you can really rest today, it will be good for your bodies, good for your souls, good mentally, good spiritually, good temporally and good eternally!

Let me give you a second reason. You will find, if you are able to take a perfect rest, by driving away these evil thoughts when you are worshipping God, *that you will do your work during the other days of the week far better*. It was an old Popish folly to try and tell what kind of weather there would be by the weather on Sunday—"If it rains before mass; rain all the week more or less." Now, we do not believe that literally; but we do believe it in a spiritual sense. If you have a bad Sabbath-day, you will have a bad week, but if you have a good day of rest, you will find it good with your souls the whole week long; not that you will be without trouble all the week, that would not be good for you, but you shall never be without divine grace during the week. Nor if you have peace on the Sunday, shall you be without peace on the Monday; the old Puritans used to say, "The first day of the week was the market day," and you know in the country villages in those times, their being fewer shops than there are now, they went to market to lay in stock for the week, and if the good wife bought a small quantity of cheese, or meat, why then, they were on short commons the whole week through! So is it with us. This is our market day, and if we gain but little today, we shall have slender diet during the other days. But, if we get the basket loaded well, if we have reason to say, "The Lord has satisfied my soul with fatness, and caused my spirit to delight in His word," you will find that during the week, your peace shall be like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea!

And then, let me remind you, in the next place, that *the character of this day demands that you should get rid of these thoughts*.

This is the day on which God said, “Let there be light, and there was light.” This is the day on which Christ rose again from the dead for our justification. Christ’s finished atonement made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness on this blessed day. This is the day on which the Holy Spirit came down from heaven—the day on which the rushing mighty wind, and the cloven tongues, descended upon the apostles! Therefore, according to apostolic custom, do we keep this day as the day of light, the day of resurrection, the day of the descent of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. Now, it is inconsistent with such a day—the day of light—for us to be in darkness! It is inconsistent with the day of resurrection, for us to be raking in this grave of the world! It is inconsistent with this day of the descent of the Spirit, for us to be thinking of carnal things, and forgetting the things which are above! It was a Romish tradition, that on Easter morning the sun always danced; and to my mind, on this day when Jesus rose and left the dead, if the sun does not dance, our heart does, and if the world is not clad in sunlight, yet our soul is! And if today the very sea does not clap its hands for gladness, yet shall our voices send forth gladsome psalms! Oh, this is not the day of bondage. Go under the whip of Moses who chose it to be so. This is the day of freedom, and of delight, the day of peace and calm, and rest, and tranquility. Work, and thoughts of work, doubts, fears, legality, self-righteousness, are all inconsistent with the spirit of the day, for Christ has said, “It is finished!” So we must cease to work, too, not only with our hands, but with our souls—working no more for life, for that is given; working no more for justification, for that is concluded; but today resting in Christ, for, “It is finished!” And, finding peace in Him for “There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.” We must leave all our cares with Him, for “nothing can separate us from the love of Christ,” and then,

give up our souls to a glorious and victorious holy day, which shall be a preparation for the eternal enjoyment of the perpetual feast of the glorified at the table of God in heaven!

Now, for this reason, because they are so inconsistent with this day, I pray you get rid of all these obnoxious thoughts. George Herbert has put all I could say, and far more, into two or three of his quaint verses, which I will give you—

“The other days and you
Make up one man; whose face you are,
Knocking at heaven with your brow—
The working days are the back part;
The burden of the week lies there,
Making the whole to stoop and bow,
Till your release appears.
Sundays the pillars are,
On which heaven's palace arched lies—
The other days fill up the spare
And hollow room with vanities.
They are the fruitful beds and borders
In God's rich garden—that is bare
Which parts their ranks and orders.
You are a day of mirth—
And where the weekdays trail on ground,
Your flight is higher, as your birth—
O let me take you at the bound,
Leaping with you from seven to seven,
Till that we both, being tossed from earth,
Fly hand in hand to heaven!”

Oh, that is the true way of living—leaping from seven to seven, passing over the six days that we may get once more to the solid resting place of the day of rest! Be it so with you,

brothers and sisters, and when the vultures come down upon the sacrifice, you may chase them away!

Another argument; the indulging of vain or anxious thoughts, when we are engaged in the worship of God, must be striven against, *because it is grievous to the Holy Spirit*. How can we expect that we shall have His presence, and His assistance, if we give Him not our hearts? Good Mr. Manton says, “If a man should send to a place of worship a skin stuffed with straw, it would be thought to be an insult, but he might as well do that as go there himself with his mind stuffed with vanities.” Was it not a crime of old—“This people draws near to Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me”? Can you conceive it enough to make long prayers, if your minds are occupied all the while about the widow’s house, or courting the approbation of man? It is vain for us to bring these oblations unto God, for His requirement is, “My son, give Me your heart.” How can the Lord, the high and lofty God, ever accept the sacrifice, where the heart is not found? It was considered to be one of the worst omens in the Roman sacrifices, if the soothsayers discovered that the victim had no heart. So, it must always be an ill omen to us, if in our worship, our heart is not set on God, and intently engaged in His service! O Spirit of God, how many of us have lost our comfort, and the joy and peace of our faith, because we have not, when we have been upon our knees or engaged in sacred songs, or in listening to the Word, compelled our thoughts to stay at home and bow down to the Most High? What do you think? If you were in the presence of a king, would he consider it to be comely or decent if you should forget why you came; if while you offered your petition, your mind should be engaged on other matters, or if you should turn your back on him to gaze out the windows while His Majesty spoke to you? And what are you doing, when your soul is looking to worldliness, while God’s own face is speaking to you, and His

Word is being read in your ears? Oh, this is to insult the Most High! Angels veil their faces, and shall our eyes be gadding abroad? Angels bow themselves before Him, and continually cry, “Holy, holy, holy” and shall we insult the Divine Majesty by coming here with unholy thoughts, or with unhallowed anxieties, not veiling our faces, but permitting them to receive all that the light of day can reveal to us of vanity, of deceit, and of care? O God! Give us divine grace to know what You are—then shall we understand how You are to be worshipped in spirit and in truth!

I shall add once more, these thoughts and cares must be driven away, for *if you do not strive against them, they will increase and multiply*. This is a growing habit. I have not to complain in this congregation of any lack of attention during the service, but I have had the pain of seeing assemblies where the wandering eye has been indulged, till at last it would be as pleasant, and perhaps as profitable, to address a load of bricks as to address the people who were assembled! They come in listlessly, some of them a half-an-hour after the service begins; and in some, where the habit has grown worse and worse, the minister generally knows when to leave off, because he sees the friends are coming in to see the others go out! They come gradually later and later, and become more and more careless about what is uttered, till an angel from heaven would scarcely make them keep open their heavy eyes, and a prophet sent from God could not stir their impassive souls! The force of habit is like the velocity of a falling stone, it increases in ever multiplying proportions. If I have indulged one unbelieving thought, there has always been another to follow it! If I have allowed some little disturbance in the congregation to cast me down, and distract my thoughts, there has been another and another and another—till I have been in the pitiable condition of a minister who has been half afraid of his congregation! And it will be so

with you. We must strive against it! We must get rid of these bothersome thoughts! We must chase these birds from the sacrifice! Away with you! Away with you! We cannot have you here! We must, we *will* worship God, and if one effort will not give us quiet, we must try again, for it must be done, or else we shall destroy our peace, and render the Sabbath as hard a day, as any of the other days of the week, while the service of God will be to us a vanity, and to Him a vain oblation.

III. I am now, then, in the last place, to try and briefly **SHOW YOU HOW TO DO IT.**

And we begin by saying, first of all, set your heart upon it, for when the soul is set upon a thing, then it is likely to accomplish it. Go up to God's house, saying, "I must give my soul to eternal matters today, and I *will*. My soul cries after God as a thirsty stag in the wilderness brays after the water-brooks. O God, my heart is fixed today; I must have done with earth, I must begin with heaven, I must say to all cares, 'Sit still,' and I must say to my soul, 'Wake up my glory, wake, psaltery and harp, I myself will awake right early to praise God.'" And when the soul is thus set upon the matter, there will be half the battle already fought, and the victory almost won!

But when you have done this, remember next—let the preparation of your heart before coming to the sacrifice assist you when you shall be there. We are told men ought not to preach without preparation. Granted. But, we add, men ought not to *hear* without preparation! Which, do you think, needs the most preparation, the sower or the ground? I would have the sower come with clean hands, but I would have the ground well plowed and harrowed, well turned over and the clods broken, before the seed is cast in. It seems to me, that there is more preparation needed by the ground, than by the sower—more by the hearer, than by the preacher! But this is forgotten. Men come to market having made up their minds what they want to

sell, and what they will buy, and they give their attention to how markets go, and they act accordingly. But, when men come into these places of worship; they do not know what they want—they do not know why they come! Perhaps it is to see the place, or hear the preacher, and they go away, and they have no spiritual profit. How could they? What profit would a man make, if he went there without a purpose, and stayed there without looking after his own interests? Prepare your hearts privately by communion with God, and you shall have communion with Him in public! Meet God in *your* house, and you shall meet Him in *His* house! What if the preacher should not profit you? It is not the preacher you came after, but his God! Be but wakeful and you will meet his God in the hymn, or in the chapter. Your heart must be in a right state beforehand. You know, brothers and sisters, if you have a lake, and the water is all rippled, there may be a cedar standing on its banks, but there cannot be perfect reflection when the water is disturbed; but when the water is as clear as glass, then whatever there is on the bank is reflected. Ah, you must bring your heart calm and quiet to the house of God, or else there cannot be an unbroken reflection of the image of God upon your spirits! Oh, seek to come up here as a bride adorned for her husband, as wedding guests going to the wedding feast with their garments on, expecting that they shall be made glad! Come here as hungry ones, pleading for food, and thirsty souls all longing for the water of life!

But, this done, above all, *cry to the Spirit of God for help to make your spirit rest*; you have trouble. He is the Comforter! You have infirmities; but “the Spirit itself also helps our infirmities.” You have sins; but the Spirit of God applies the peace-speaking blood of Christ, gives you rest in conscience. Cry unto Him! Cry unto Him as a little child cries to its parent when it has attempted something which it cannot perform. Say, “Father,

help me! I would worship You—O enable me to do so; I would see You—touch my eyes with heavenly eye salve; I would hear You—open my ears today to Your voice, and seal them up to all besides! I would feed on You—Lord, open my lips for You, the bread of heaven, and let me feed on nothing save Yourself.” This done, He is a God who hears prayer, and He will grant you the desire of your heart!

Then, when you have thus done, and you come up to the house of God, still *seek to continue in the same frame of mind*, remembering in whose immediate presence you are. A Spartan youth was holding the censor at a sacrifice, when Alexander was offering a victim. It chanced that while he held the censor, a hot coal fell upon his hand. The youth stood still, and never flinched, lest by any utterance or cry, the sacrifice should be disturbed; for he said he was in the presence of Alexander, and he would not have the sacrifice interrupted for him; and thus, he bore the pain of the burning coal. Let us remember that Spartan youth, but adding to what he said—“We are in the presence of the Almighty God.” Then, if there is something which annoys us, let us bear it unflinchingly, for we stand before Him for whom it is blessed to suffer, and who will surely reward those who seek Him in spirit and in truth. It is written in Josephus that certain of the Jewish priests, at the time of the taking of the temple, were standing at the altar. They were waving to and fro the slowed censers, and offering their prayers, and their victims. The Romans rushed in, sword in hand. There were shrieks and cries, murders and deaths; the pavement was stained with blood, but the priests took no notice whatever, nor would they turn from their sacrifice till they were themselves slain! Oh, for something of their devotedness to God, that even death itself might not interrupt our songs, but when it comes, may we be found wrapped in meditation, high hymning our great Creator, expecting His glory, and waiting for His

appearance! Many instances we might quote of the attention which the superstitious heathen paid to their worship. Shall we be behind them in the reality and sincerity of our adoration of the Most High and Holy God? No, let us, keeping our minds always fixed upon beholding the face of God, thus seek to chase away the birds from the sacrifice!

Another means I will give you. *Take care that your faith is in active exercise*, or else you cannot chase away those thoughts. Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. Be still, and know that He is God. Trust in Him at all times; pour out your hearts before Him. Wait on the Lord; be of good courage. Depend upon His power, and His wisdom, and thus you shall have no thought to trouble you of what you shall eat, or what you shall drink, or whether you shall be clothed, but, like the birds of the air that keep eternal song, the lilies of the valley which keep perpetual Sabbath, so shall you sing and rest, and Christ shall be glorified in you!

Take care also, that you *attend a ministry which draws you from earth*, for there are some dead ministries which make the Sabbath more intolerable than any of the other days of the week. Such are the controversial ministries in which the brain is set to work, and exercised and troubled, with questions, and dilemmas, and disputes, and contentions. I will not say it is wicked to preach such sermons on the Sabbath, but, I will say, it is not consistent with Sabbath rest, for that rest is as much for the soul as for the body, and the Sabbath was not made only for the animal part of us, but for the spirit, that it might have a deep, profound calm, the foretaste of the rest which remains for the people of God! Seek a ministry that is full of Christ, full of covenant faithfulness; a ministry not of “ifs” and “buts,” but of “shalls” and “wills.” Seek a ministry which vindicates the Spirit’s power; which, while it teaches fully the sinner’s abject helplessness, dwells much upon the absolute omnipotence of

God to save. Seek one which preaches a full Christ for empty sinners, whose theme is death, and resurrection; whose objective it is to make Christ precious to your heart, and so to compel you to trust in Him! Thus you shall find it more easy to rest on the Sabbath, than if you should attend under the legal preacher, whose theme is moral duties; or under the mere doctrinal preacher, whose objective is contention and fighting; or under the mere experimental preacher, whose aim shall be to stir up the filthy mud of your heart, instead of pouring into you the pure clean water of the truth as it is in Jesus.

O, my brothers and sisters, I know how many there are of you who look forward all the week long to this day! And there are times when some of us, when we awake in the morning, can spring from our beds saying, “Thank God, this is the day of rest.” Today we can say, “Now, I am not to go to my toil today; farewell, the bricklayer’s trowel, or the carpenter’s hammer; I have not to go to my books today. The high stool, and the desk, and the pen are put away; I am not today, to look after the servants, and the fields, and the barn; not today, to walk along the shop, and see how trade is prospering or how it is receding. It is all over now. Just nail up those doors, and leave them alone; have nothing to do with them! Do not tell me that I have a house, or that I have anything to think of, except Christ Jesus, His Father, and the Holy Spirit. Get you gone, vain thoughts! I cannot meddle with you; keep your distance, I have had enough of you; you have had your six days, and you have pinched and pained me enough! Now my soul has passed through the wilderness, sits down at the well of Elim, sends down its pitcher, draws up draughts of rest, climbs the palm tree, plucks the sweet fruits, and enjoys them in anticipation of the feast before the throne of God!” Ah, this will be good for your bodies, good for your souls, and good for you in all respects! And my sermon shall not be in vain this morning, if I have made you think every

Sunday, “The birds will come down on the carcasses, but I will drive them away.” Nor will it be in vain if, by God’s grace, you will come to look, not only on this one day, but on your seasons of prayer and meditation, as being unloading seasons, when the ship that has been sinking in the water almost to its edge, and seems as if it would go down altogether, is unloaded, and rises up and floats higher than it did before! When the eagle gets the chain untied, and leaps from the rock, up to its own native nest in the skies—when your poor bandaged captive soul, that has been lying in the dark dungeon, comes out to perfect liberty, and takes its stroll abroad, forgetful of the prison and the chain. Oh, for those heavens on earth—those precious queens of days! Time is the ring, and these Sabbaths are the diamonds set in it! The ordinary days are but the walks in the garden, hand trodden and barren; but the Sabbaths are the beds full of rich choice flowers! This day is Care’s balm and cure, the couch of time, the haven of divine calms. Come, my Soul, throw yourself upon this couch; for now the bed is long enough, and the coverlet is broad enough—rest and take your ease—for you have come unto Jesus, to a finished sacrifice, to a completed righteousness, and your soul may be satisfied in the Lord, and your spirit may rejoice in the Lord your God. This is to keep Sabbath!

An unconverted man or woman cannot do this; and there are many of you, I fear, here present who never knew what Sabbath means—never had a Lord’s Day in your lives! In vain do you keep the day, unless, your hearts keep it too. Oh, may your hearts know how to find in Christ a perfect rest! Then shall the land have rest, and shall keep her Sabbaths. May God give you divine grace to know your sin, and enable you to fly to the Savior, and find in Him all your soul needs! May He enable you to rest in Christ today, and then you shall keep Sabbaths on earth till you keep the eternal Sabbath before the throne, “For thus says the Spirit, ‘They rest from their labors.’”

“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ,” and you shall have rest. Trust Him, and so shall you be saved, and your spirit shall be at ease.

421 “IT IS FINISHED!” – JOHN 19:30

**A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Morning, December 1st, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished: and He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.”
— John 19:30**

MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS, I would have you attentively observe the singular clearness, power, and quickness of the Savior’s mind in the last agonies of death. When pains and groans attend the last hour, they frequently have the effect of discomposing the mind, so that it is not possible for the dying man to collect his thoughts, or having collected them, to utter them so that they can be understood by others. In no case could we expect a remarkable exercise of memory or a profound judgment upon deep subjects from an expiring man. But the Redeemer’s last acts were full of wisdom and prudence, although His sufferings were excruciating beyond all measure! Mark how clearly He perceived the significance of every type! How plainly He could read, with dying eye, those divine symbols which the eyes of angels could only desire to look into! He saw the secrets which have bewildered sages and astonished seers, all fulfilled in His own body. Nor must we fail to observe the power and comprehensiveness by which He grasped the chain which binds the shadowy past with the sun-lit present. We must not forget the brilliance of that intelligence which

threaded all the ceremonies and sacrifices on one string of thought, beheld all the prophecies as one great revelation, and all the promises as the heralds of one person, and then said of the whole, "It is finished!" "Finished in Me." What quickness of mind was that which enabled Him to traverse all the centuries of prophecy; to penetrate the eternity of the covenant, and then to anticipate the eternal glories! And all this when He is mocked by multitudes of enemies, and when His hands and feet are nailed to the cross! What force of mind the Savior must have possessed, to soar above those Alps of agony, which touched the very clouds. In what a singular mental condition must He have been during the period of His crucifixion, to be able to review the whole roll of inspiration! Now, this remark may not seem to be of any great value, but I think its value lies in certain inferences that may be drawn from it. We have sometimes heard it said, "How could Christ, in so short a time, bear suffering which should be equivalent to the torments—the eternal torments of hell?" Our reply is, we are not capable of judging what the Son of God might do even in a moment, much less what He might do and what He might suffer in His life, and in His death. It has been frequently affirmed by persons who have been rescued from drowning, that the mind of a drowning man is singularly active. One who, after being some time in the water, was at last painfully restored, said that the whole of his history seemed to come before his mind while he was sinking, and that if anyone had asked him how long he had been in the water, he would have said 20 years, whereas, he had only been there for a moment or two! The wild romance of Mohamed's journey upon Alborak is not an unfitting illustration. He affirmed that when the angel came in vision to take him on his celebrated journey to Jerusalem, he went through all the seven heavens, and saw all the wonders thereof, and yet, he was gone so short a time that though the angel's

wing had touched a basin of water when they started, they returned soon enough to prevent the water from being spilt. The long dream of the epileptic impostor may really have occupied but a second of time! The intellect of mortal man is such that, if God wills it, when it is in certain states, it can think out centuries of thought at once; it can go through in one instant what we would have supposed would have taken years upon years of time for it to know or feel. We think, therefore, that from the Savior's singular clearness and quickness of intellect upon the cross, it is very possible that He did in the space of two or three hours endure, not only the agony which might have been contained in centuries, but even an equivalent for that which might be comprehended in everlasting punishment! At any rate, it is not for us to say that it could not be so. When the Deity is arrayed in manhood, then manhood becomes omnipotent to suffer; and just as the feet of Christ were once almighty to tread the seas, so now His whole body became almighty to dive into the great waters, to endure an immersion in "unknown agonies." Do not, I pray, let us attempt to measure Christ's sufferings by the finite one of our own ignorant reason, but let us know and believe that what He endured there was accepted by God as an equivalent for all our pains, and therefore it could not have been a trifle, but must have been all that Hart conceived it to be, when he says He bore—

“All that incarnate God could bear,
With strength enough, but none to spare.”

My discourse will, I have no doubt, more fully illustrate the remark with which I have commenced; let us proceed to it at once. First, *let us hear the text and understand it*; then, *let us hear it and wonder at it*; and then, thirdly, *let us hear it and proclaim it*.

I. LET US HEAR THE TEXT AND UNDERSTAND IT.

The Son of God has been made man. He has had a life of perfect virtue, and of total self-denial. He has been all that life despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. His enemies have been legion; His friends have been few, and those few faithless. He is at last delivered over into the hands of them who hate Him. He is arrested while in the act of prayer; He is arraigned before both the spiritual and temporal courts. He is robed in mockery, and then unrobed in shame. He is set upon His throne in scorn, and then tied to the pillar in cruelty. He is declared innocent, and yet, He is delivered up by the judge who ought to have preserved Him from His persecutors. He is dragged through the streets of that Jerusalem which had killed the prophets, and would now crimson itself with the blood of the prophets' Master. He is brought to the cross; He is nailed fast to the cruel wood. The sun burns Him. His cruel wounds increase the fever. God forsakes Him. "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" contains the concentrated anguish of the world. While He hangs there in mortal conflict with sin and Satan, His heart is broken, His limbs are dislocated. Heaven fails Him, for the sun is veiled in darkness. Earth forsakes Him, for "His disciples forsook Him and fled." He looks everywhere, and there is none to help; He casts His eyes around, and there is no man that can share His toil. He treads the winepress alone; and of all the people, there is none with Him. On, on, He goes, steadily determined to drink the last dreg of that cup which must not pass from Him if His Father's will is done. At last, He cries—"It is finished!" and He gives up His spirit. Hear it, Christians, hear this shout of triumph as it rings today with all the freshness and force which it had 1,800 years ago! Hear it from the Sacred Word, and from the Savior's lips, and may the Spirit of God open your

ears that you may hear as the learned, and understand what you hear!

1. What meant the Savior, then, by this—"It is finished!"? He meant, first of all, *that all the types, promises, and prophecies were now fully accomplished in Him.* Those who are acquainted with the original will find that the words, "It is finished," occur twice within three verses. In the 28th verse, we have the word in the Greek; it is translated in our version "accomplished," but there it stands—"After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now *finished*, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, 'I thirst.'" And then, He afterwards said, "It is finished!" This leads us to see His meaning very clearly, that all the Scripture was now fulfilled, that when He said, "It is finished!" the whole book, from the first to the last, in both the law and the prophets, was finished in Him! There is not a single jewel of promise, from that first emerald which fell on the threshold of Eden, to that last sapphire of Malachi which was not set in the breastplate of the true High Priest. No, there is not a type, from the red heifer downward to the turtle dove, from the hyssop upwards to Solomon's temple itself, which was not fulfilled in Him; and not a prophecy, whether spoken on Chebar's bank, or on the shores of Jordan; not a dream of wise men, whether they had received it in Babylon, or in Samaria, or in Judea, which was not now fully worked out in Christ Jesus! And, brothers and sisters, what a wonderful thing it is, that a mass of promises, and prophecies, and types, apparently so heterogeneous, should all be accomplished in one person! Take away Christ for one moment, and I will give the Old Testament to any wise man living, and say to him, "Take this. This is a problem; go home and construct in your imagination an ideal character who shall exactly fit all that which is herein foreshadowed. Remember, he must be a prophet like unto Moses, and yet a champion like Joshua; he must be an Aaron and a Melchizedek;

he must be David and Solomon, Noah and Jonah, Judah and Joseph. No, he must not only be the lamb that was slain, and the scapegoat that was not slain, the turtledove that was dipped in blood, and the priest who slew the bird, but he must be the altar, the tabernacle, the mercy seat and the showbread!" No, to puzzle this wise man further, we remind him of prophecies so apparently contradictory, that one would think they never could meet in one man! Such as these, "All kings shall fall down before Him, and all nations shall serve Him;" and yet, "He is despised and rejected of men." He must begin by showing a man born of a virgin mother— "A virgin shall conceive and bear a Son." He must be a man without spot or blemish, but yet one upon whom the Lord does cause to meet the iniquities of us all. He must be a glorious one, a Son of David, but yet, a root out of a dry ground. Now, I say it boldly, if all the greatest intellects of all the ages could set themselves to work out this problem, to invent another key to the types and prophecies, they could not do it! I see you, you wise men, you are poring over these hieroglyphs; one suggests one key, and it opens two or three of the figures, but you cannot proceed, for the next one puts you at a perplexity! Another learned man suggests another clue, but that fails most where it is most needed, and another, and another, and thus, these wondrous hieroglyphs, traced of old by Moses in the wilderness, must be left unexplained, till one comes forward and proclaims, "The cross of Christ and the Son of God incarnate!" Then, the whole is clear, so that he who runs may read, and a child may understand. Blessed Savior! In You we see everything fulfilled which God spoke of in old by the prophets! In You we discover everything carried out in substance which God had set before us in the dim mist of sacrificial smoke! Glory be unto Your name! "It is finished"—everything is summed up in YOU!

2. But the words have richer meaning. Not only were all types, and prophecies, and promises thus finished in Christ, but *all the typical sacrifices of the old Jewish law were now abolished, as well as explained*. They were finished—finished in Him! Will you imagine for a minute the saints in heaven looking down upon what was done on earth—Abel and his friends who had long ago before the Flood been sitting in the glories above? They watch while God lights star after star in heaven. Promise after promise flashes light upon the thick darkness of earth. They see Abraham come, and they look down and wonder while they see God revealing Christ to Abraham in the person of Isaac. They gaze just as the angels do, desiring to look into the mystery. From the times of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, they see altars smoking, recognitions of the fact that man is guilty, and the spirits before the throne say, “Lord, when will sacrifices finish?—when will blood no more be shed?” The offering of bloody sacrifices soon increases. It is now carried on by men ordained for the purpose! Aaron and the high priests, and the Levites every morning and every evening offer a lamb, while great sacrifices are offered on special occasions. Bulls groan, rams bleed, the necks of doves are wrung, and all the while the saints are crying, “O Lord, how long?—when shall the sacrifice cease?” Year after year, the high priest goes within the veil and sprinkles the mercy seat with blood; the next year sees him do the same, and the next, and again, and again, and again! David offers tens of hundreds, Solomon slaughters tens of thousands, Hezekiah offers rivers of oil, Josiah gives thousands of the fat of fed beasts, and the spirits of the just say, “Will it never be complete?—will the sacrifice never be finished?—must there always be a remembrance of sin?—will not the last High Priest soon come?—will not the order and line of Aaron soon lay aside its labor, because the whole is finished?” Not yet, not yet, you spirits of the just, for after the captivity, the slaughter of

victims still remains! But lo, He comes! Gaze more intently than before—He comes who is to close the line of priests! Lo, there He stands, clothed—not now with linen ephod, not with ringing bells, nor with sparkling jewels on His breastplate—but arrayed in human flesh He stands, His cross, His altar, His body and His soul, the victim, Himself the priest, and lo, before His God, He offers up His own soul within the veil of thick darkness which has covered Him from the sight of men! Presenting His own blood, He enters within the veil, sprinkles it there, and coming forth from the midst of the darkness, He looks down on the astonished earth, and upward to expectant heaven, and cries, "*It is finished! It is finished!*"—that for which you looked so long, is fully achieved and perfected forever!

3. The Savior meant, we doubt not, that in this moment, *His perfect obedience was finished*. It was necessary, in order that man might be saved, that the law of God should be kept, for no man can see God's face except he is perfect in righteousness. Christ undertook to keep God's law for His people, to obey its every mandate, and preserve its every statute intact. Throughout the first years of His life, He privately obeyed, honoring His father and His mother; during the next three years, He publicly obeyed God, spending and being spent in His service, till if you would know what a man would be whose life was wholly conformed to the law of God, you may see him in Christ—

"My dear Redeemer and my Lord,
I read my duty in Your word,
But in Your life the law appears
Drawn out in living characters."

It needed nothing to complete the perfect virtue of life but the entire obedience of death. He who would serve God must

be willing not only to give all his soul and his strength while he lives, but he must stand prepared to resign his life when it shall be for God's glory. Our perfect substitute put the last stroke upon His work by dying, and therefore, He claims to be absolved from further debt, for "It is finished!" Yes, glorious Lamb of God, it is finished! You have been tempted in all points like as we are, yet have You sinned in none! It *was* finished, for the last arrow out of Satan's quiver had been shot at You; the last blasphemous insinuation, the last wicked temptation had spent its fury on You; the prince of this world had surveyed You from head to foot, within and without, but he had found nothing in You. Now, your trial is over, You have finished the work which Your Father gave You to do, and so finished it that hell itself cannot accuse You of a flaw. And now, looking upon Your entire obedience, You say, "It is finished," and we Your people believe most joyously that it is even so! Brothers and sisters, this is more than you or I could have said if Adam had never fallen! If we had been in the garden of Eden today, we could never have boasted a finished righteousness, since a creature can never finish its obedience. As long as a creature lives, it is bound to obey, and as long as a free agent exists on earth it would be in danger of violating the vow of its obedience. If Adam had been in Paradise from the first day until now, he might fall tomorrow. Left to himself there would be no reason why that king of nature could not yet be uncrowned! But Christ the Creator, who finished creation, has perfected redemption. God can ask no more. The law has received all it claims; the largest extent of justice cannot demand another hour's obedience. It is done! It is complete! The last throw of the shuttle is over, and the robe is woven from the top throughout. Let us rejoice, then, in this that the Master meant by His dying cry, that His perfect righteousness, wherewith He covers us, was finished!

4. But next, the Savior meant *that the satisfaction which He rendered to the justice of God was finished*. The debt was now, to the last farthing, all discharged. The atonement and propitiation were made once for all, and forever, by the one offering made in Jesus' body on the tree. There was the cup; hell was in it; the Savior drank it—not a sip, and then a pause; not a draught, and then a ceasing; but He drained it till there is not a dreg left for any of His people! The great ten-throged whip of the law was worn out upon His back; there is no lash left with which to smite one for whom Jesus died! The great bombardment of God's justice has exhausted all its ammunition; there is nothing left to be hurled against a child of God! Sheathed is your sword, O justice! Silenced is your thunder, O law! There remains nothing now of all the griefs, and pains, and agonies which chosen sinners ought to have suffered for their sins, for Christ has endured all for His own beloved, and "It is finished." Brothers and sisters, *it is more than the damned in hell can ever say*. If you and I had been compelled to make satisfaction to God's justice by being sent to hell, we never could have said, "It is finished." Christ has paid the debt which all the torments of eternity could not have paid! Lost souls, you suffer today as you have suffered for ages past, but God's justice is not satisfied, His law is not fully magnified. And when time shall fail, and eternity shall have been flying on, still forever, the uttermost farthing never having been paid, the punishment for sin must fall upon unpardoned sinners! But Christ has done what all the flames of the pit of hell could not do in all eternity; He has magnified the law and made it honorable, and now, from the cross he cries—"It is finished!"

5. Once again—when He said, "It is finished," *Jesus had totally destroyed the power of Satan, of sin, and of death*. The champion had entered the lists to do battle for our soul's redemption against all our foes. He met Sin. Horrible, terrible, all-but

omnipotent Sin nailed Him to the cross; but in that deed, Christ nailed Sin also to the tree. There, they both did hang together—Sin and Sin's Destroyer. Sin destroyed Christ, and, by that destruction, Christ destroyed Sin! Next came the second enemy, Satan. He assaulted Christ with all his hosts. Calling up his warriors from every corner and quarter of the universe, he said, "Awake, arise, or be forever fallen! Here is our great enemy who has sworn to bruise my head; now, let us bruise His heel!" They shot their hellish darts into His heart; they poured their boiling cauldrons on His brain; they emptied their venom into His veins; they spat their insinuations into His face; they hissed their devilish fears into His ears. He stood alone, the lion of the tribe of Judah, hounded by all the dogs of hell! Our champion quailed not, but used His holy weapons, striking right and left with all the power of God-supported manhood! On came the hosts; volley after volley was discharged against Him. No mimic thunders were these, but such as might shake the very gates of hell! The conqueror steadily advanced, overturning their ranks, dashing in pieces His enemies, breaking the bow, and cutting the spear in sunder, and burning the chariots in the fire, while He cried, "In the name of God will I destroy you!" At last, foot to foot, He met the champion of hell, and now our David fought with Goliath. Not long was the struggle; thick was the darkness which gathered round them both; but He, who is the Son of God as well as the Son of Mary, knew how to smite the fiend, and He did smite him with divine fury, till, having despoiled him of his armor, having quenched his fiery darts, and broken his head, He cried, "It is finished" and sent the fiend, bleeding and howling, down to hell! We can imagine him pursued by the eternal Savior, who exclaims—

"Traitor!

My bolt shall find and pierce you through,

Though under hell's profoundest wave
You dive to seek a sheltering grave."

His thunderbolt overtook the fiend, and grasping him with both His hands, the Savior drew around him the great chain. The angels brought the royal chariot from on high, to whose wheels the captive fiend was bound. Lash the mighty steeds up the everlasting hills! Spirits made perfect come forth to meet Him. Sing to the conqueror who drags death and hell behind Him, and leads captivity captive! "Lift up your heads, O you gates, and be you lifted up, you everlasting doors, that the King of glory may come in." But stop; before He enters, let Him be rid of this His burden. Lo, He takes the fiend, and hurls him down through illimitable night, broken, bruised, with his power destroyed, bereft of his crown, to lie forever howling in the pit of hell! Thus, when the Savior cried, "It is finished," He had defeated Sin and Satan; nor less had he vanquished Death. Death had come against Him, as Christmas Evans puts it, with his fiery dart, which he struck right through the Savior, till the point fixed in the cross, and when he tried to pull it out again, he left the sting behind. What more could he do? He was disarmed! Then Christ set some of his prisoners free; for many of the saints arose and were seen of many—then He said to him, "Death, I take from you your keys; you must live for a little while to be the warden of those beds in which My saints shall sleep, but give Me your keys." And lo, the Savior stands today with the keys of death hanging at His belt, and He waits until the hour shall come of which no man knows; when the trumpet of the archangel shall ring like the silver trumpets of Jubilee, and then He shall say, "Let My captives go free." Then, shall the tombs be opened in virtue of Christ's death, and the very bodies of the saints shall live again in an eternity of glory—

“It is finished!”

Hear the dying Savior cry.”

II. Secondly, **LET US HEAR AND WONDER.**

Let us perceive what mighty things were effected and secured by these words, “It is finished.” Thus, He *ratified the covenant*. That covenant was signed and sealed before, and in all things it was ordered well, but when Christ said, “It is finished,” then the covenant was made doubly sure; when the blood of Christ’s heart bespattered the divine roll, then it could never be reversed, nor could one of its ordinances be broken, nor one of its stipulations fail! You know of the everlasting covenant—God covenants on His part that He would give Christ to see of the travail of His soul; that all who were given to Him should have new hearts and right spirits; that they should be washed from sin, and should enter into life through Him. Christ’s side of the covenant was this—“Father, I will do Your will; I will pay the ransom to the last jot and tittle; I will give You perfect obedience and complete satisfaction.” Now, if this second part of the covenant had never been fulfilled, the first part would have been invalid, but when Jesus said, “It is finished,” then there was nothing left to be performed on His part, and now, the covenant is all on one side. It is God’s, “I will,” and “They shall.” “A new heart will I give you and a right spirit will I put within you.” “I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean.” “From all your iniquities will I cleanse you.” “I will lead you by a way that you know not.” “I will surely bring them in.” The covenant that day was ratified. When Christ said, “It is finished,” *His Father was honored, and divine justice was fully displayed*. The Father always did love His people. Do not think that Christ died to make God the Father loving. He *always* had loved them from before the foundation of the world, but—“It is finished,” took away the barriers which were in the Father’s

way. He would, as a God of love, and now He could as a God of justice, bless poor sinners. From that day, the Father is well-pleased to receive sinners to His bosom. When Christ said—"It is finished," *He Himself was glorified*. Then, on His head descended the all-glorious crown! Then, did the Father give to Him honors, which He had not before. He had honor as God, but as man, He was despised and rejected; now, as God and man, Christ was made to sit down forever on His Father's throne, crowned with honor and majesty! Then, too, by "It is finished," *the Spirit was procured for us*—

"'Tis by the merit of His death
Who hung upon the tree,
The Spirit is sent down to breathe
On such dry bones as we."

Then, the Spirit which Christ had aforetime promised, perceived a new and living way by which He could come to dwell in the hearts of men, and men might come up to dwell with Him above. That day, too, when Christ said—"It is finished," *the words had effect on heaven*. Then, the walls of chrysolite stood fast; then, the jasper light of the pearly-gated city shone like the light of seven days. Before, the saints had been saved as it were on credit. They had entered heaven, God having faith in His Son Jesus. Had not Christ finished His work, surely they must have left their shining spheres, and suffered in their own persons for their own sins. I might represent heaven, if my imagination might be allowed a moment, as being ready to totter if Christ had not finished His work; its stones would have been unloosed; massive and stupendous though its bastions are, yet, they would have fallen as earthly cities reel under the throes of earthquakes. But Christ said, "It is finished," and oath, and covenant, and blood set fast the dwelling place

of the Redeemed, made their mansions safely and eternally their own, and bade their feet stand immovably upon the rock! No, more, that word, “It is finished!” took effect in the gloomy caverns and depths of HELL! Then, Satan bit his iron bands in a rage, howling, “I am defeated by the very man whom I thought to overcome; my hopes are blasted; never shall an elect one come into my prison, never a blood-bought one be found in my abode.” Lost souls mourned that day, for they said—“It is finished! And if Christ Himself, the substitute, could not be permitted to go free till He had finished all His punishment, then, we shall never be free!” It was their double death-knell, for they said, “Alas for us! Justice, which would not allow the Savior to escape, will never allow us to be at liberty. It is finished with Him, and therefore, it shall *never* be finished for us.” That day, too, the earth had a gleam of sunlight cast over her which she had never known before! Then, her hilltops began to glisten with the rising of the sun, and though her valleys still are clothed with darkness, and men wander here and there, and grope in the noon-day as in the night, yet, that sun is rising, climbing still its heavenly steeps, never to set, and soon shall its rays penetrate through the thick mists and clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and every heart be made glad with His light! The words “It is finished!” consolidated heaven, shook hell, comforted earth; delighted the Father, glorified the Son, brought down the Spirit, and confirmed the everlasting covenant to all the chosen seed!

III. And now, I come to my last point, very briefly. “It is finished!” **LET US PUBLISH IT.**

Children of God, you who by faith received Christ as your all-in-all, tell it every day of your lives that “It is finished!” Go and tell it to those who are torturing themselves thinking through obedience and mortification to offer satisfaction. Yonder Hindu is about to throw himself down upon the spikes.

Stop, poor man! Why would you bleed, for "It is finished"? Yonder Fakir is holding his hand erect till the nails grow through the flesh, torturing himself with fasting and with self-denials! Cease, cease, poor wretch, from all these pains, for "It is finished!" In all parts of the earth, there are those who think that the misery of the body and the soul may be atonement for sin. Rush to them, stop them in their madness, and say to them, "Why do you this? 'It is finished!'" All the pains that God asks, Christ has suffered! All the satisfaction by way of agony in the flesh that the law demands, Christ has already endured! "It is finished!" And when you have done this, go next to the ignorant adherents of Rome, when you see the priests with their backs to the people, offering every day the pretended "sacrifice of the mass," and lifting up the "host on high"—a sacrifice, they say—"an unbloody sacrifice for the quick and the dead." Cry to them, "Cease, false priest, cease; for 'It is finished!' Cease, false worshipper, cease to bow, for 'It is finished!'" God neither asks nor accepts any other sacrifice than that which Christ offered once for all upon the cross! Go next to the foolish among your own countrymen who call themselves Protestants, but who are really Papists after all, who think by their gifts and their gold, by their prayers and their vows, by their church, and their chapel attendance, by their baptisms and their confirmations, to make themselves fit for God! And say to them, "Stop, 'it is finished.' God needs not this of you! He has received enough. Why will you pin your rags to the fine linen of Christ's righteousness? Why will you add your counterfeit farthing to the costly ransom which Christ has paid into the treasure-house of God? Cease from your pains, your works, your performances, for 'It is finished!' Christ has done it all."

This one text is enough to blow the Vatican to the four winds! Lay but this beneath Popery, and like a train of

gunpowder beneath a rock, it shall blast it into the air! This is a thunderclap against *all* human righteousness! Only let this come like a two-edged sword, and your good works and your fine performances are soon cast away. "It is finished." Why improve on what is finished? Why add to that which is complete? The Bible is finished—he that adds to it never had his name in the Book of Life, and will never see the holy city—Christ's atonement is finished, and he who adds to that must expect the same doom! And when you shall have told it thus to the ears of men of every nation and of every tribe, tell it to all poor despairing souls. You find them on their knees, crying, "O God, what can I do to make recompense for my offenses?" Tell them, "It is finished;" the recompense is already made. "O God!" they say, "How can I ever get a righteousness in which You can accept such a worm as I am." Tell them, "It is finished;" their righteousness is already worked out; they have no need to trouble themselves about adding to it, if "It is finished." Go to the poor despairing wretch, who has given himself up, not merely for death, but for damnation—he who says, "I cannot escape from sin, and I cannot be saved from its punishment." Say to him, "Sinner, the way of salvation is finished once and for all." And if you meet some professed Christians in doubts and fears, tell them, "It is finished." Why, we have hundreds and thousands who are converted who do not know that "It is finished!" They never know that they are safe! They do not know that "It is finished." They think they have faith today, but perhaps they may become unbelieving tomorrow. They do not know that "It is finished!" They hope God will accept them, if they do some things, forgetting that the way of acceptance is finished! God as much accepts a sinner who only believed in Christ five minutes ago, as He will a saint who has known and loved Him 80 years, for He does not accept men because of anything *they do* or feel, but simply and only for what *Christ did*

and *that is finished!* Oh, poor hearts, some of you do love the Savior in a measure, but blindly. You are thinking that you must be this, and attain to that, and then you may be assured that you are saved. Oh, you may be assured of it today—if you believe in Christ, you are saved! "But I feel imperfections." Yes, but what of that? God does not regard your imperfections, but He covers them with Christ's righteousness! He sees them to remove them, but not to lay them to your charge. "Yes, but I cannot be what I would be." But what if you cannot? God does not look at *you*, as what you are in *yourself*, but as what you are in *Christ!*

Come with me, poor soul, and you and I will stand together this morning, while the storm gathers, for we are not afraid. How sharp that lightning flash! But yet, we tremble not. How terrible that peal of thunder! And yet, we are not alarmed, and why? Is there anything in us why we should escape? No, but we are standing beneath the cross—that precious cross, which like some noble lightning rod in the storm, takes to itself all the death from the lighting, and all the fury from the storm. We are safe! Loud may you roar, O thundering law, and terribly may you flash, O avenging justice! We can look up with calm delight to all the tumult of the elements, for we are safe beneath the cross!

Come with me again. There is a royal banquet spread; the King Himself sits at the table, and angels are the servitors. Let us enter. And we do enter, and we sit down and eat and drink; but how dare we do this? Our righteousnesses are as filthy rags—how dare we venture to come here? Oh, because the filthy rags are not ours any longer! We have renounced our own righteousness, and therefore, we have renounced the filthy rags, and now, today, we wear the royal garments of the Savior, and are from head to foot arrayed in white, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing! We stand in the clear sunlight—black, but

comely; loathsome in ourselves, but glorious in Him! Condemned in Adam, but accepted in the beloved! We are neither afraid nor ashamed to be with the angels of God, to talk with the glorified, no, nor even alarmed to speak with God Himself and call Him our friend.

And now, last of all, I publish this to *sinners*. I know not where you are this morning, but may God find you; you who have been a drunkard, swearer, thief; you who have been a blackguard of the blackest kind; you who have dived into the very kennel, and rolled yourself in the mire—if today you feel that sin is hateful to you, believe in Him who has said, “It is finished!” Let me link your hand in mine; let us come together, both of us, and say, “Here are two poor naked souls, good Lord; we cannot clothe ourselves.” And He will give us a robe, for “It is finished!” “But, Lord, is it long enough for such sinners and broad enough for such offenders?” “Yes,” He says, “It is finished!” “But we need washing, Lord! Is there anything that can take away black spots as hideous as ours?” “Yes,” He says, “here is the bath of blood.” “But must we not add our tears to it?” “No,” He says, “no, it is finished, there is enough.” “And now, Lord, You have washed us, and You have clothed us, but we desire to be completely clean *within*, so that we may never sin any more. Lord, is there a way by which this can be done?” “Yes” He says, “there is the bath of water which flows from the wounded side of Christ.” “And, Lord, is there enough there to wash away my guiltiness as well as my guilt?” “Yes,” He says, “It is finished!” “Jesus Christ is made unto you sanctification as well as redemption.” Child of God, will you have Christ’s finished righteousness this morning, and will you rejoice in it more than you have ever done before? And oh, poor sinner, will you have Christ or nothing? “Ah,” says one, “I am willing enough, but I am not worthy.” He does not need any worthiness! All He asks is *willingness*, for you know how He puts

it, "Whoever will, let him come." If He has *given you willingness*, you may believe in Christ's finished work this morning! "Ah," says one, "but you cannot mean *me*." But I do, for it says, "Ho, *everyone* who thirsts." Do you thirst for Christ? Do you wish to be saved by Him? "*Everyone* who thirsts"—not only that young woman yonder, not simply that gray-headed old rebel yonder who has long despised the Savior, but this mass below, and you in these double tiers of gallery—"Everyone who thirsts, come you to the waters, and he that has no money come."

O that I could "compel" you to come! Great God, won't You make the sinner willing to be saved, for he wills to be damned, and will not come unless You change his will! Eternal Spirit, source of light, and life, and grace, come down and bring the strangers home! "It is finished!" Sinner, there is nothing for God to do. "It is finished!" There is nothing for you to do. "It is finished," "Christ need not bleed." It is finished. "You need not weep." "It is finished." God the Holy Spirit need not tarry because of your unworthiness, nor need you tarry because of your helplessness. "It is finished!" Every stumbling block is rolled out of the road; every gate is opened; the bars of brass are broken; the gates of iron are burst asunder. "It is finished!" Come and welcome, come and welcome! The table is laid, the fatlings are killed; the oxen are ready. Lo, here stands the messenger! Come from the highways and from the hedges; come from the dens and from the alleys of London! Come, you vilest of the vile; you who hate yourselves today, come! Jesus bids you! Oh, will you tarry? Oh, Spirit of God, repeat the invitation, and make it an effectual call to many hearts, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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**A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Morning, December 8th, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the
children of God.” — Matthew 5:9**

THIS IS the seventh of the beatitudes. There is a mystery always connected with the number seven. It was the number of perfection among the Hebrews, and it seems as if the Savior had put the peacemaker there, as if He were nearly approaching to the perfect man in Christ Jesus. He who would have perfect blessedness, as far as it can be enjoyed on earth, must labor to attain to this seventh benediction, and become a peacemaker. There is, also, significance in the position of the text, if you regard the context. The verse which precedes it speaks of the blessedness of “the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” It is well that we should understand this. We are to be “first pure, then peaceable.” Our peaceableness is never to be a compact with sin, or an alliance with that which is evil. We must set our faces like flints against everything which is contrary to God and His holiness. That being in our souls a settled matter, we can go on to peaceableness towards men. Not less, does the verse that follows my text, seem to have been put there on purpose. However peaceable we may be in this world, yet we shall be misrepresented and misunderstood; and no marvel, for even the Prince of peace, by His very peacefulness, brought fire

upon the earth. He Himself, though He loved mankind, and did no ill, was “despised and rejected of men, a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” Lest, therefore, the peaceable in heart should be surprised when they meet with enemies, it is added in the following verse, “Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Thus, the peacemakers are not only pronounced to be blessed, but they are compassed about with blessings! Lord, give us Divine grace to climb to this seventh beatitude! Purify our minds that we may be “first pure, then peaceable,” and fortify our souls, that our peaceableness may not lead us into surprise and despair, when for Your sake we are persecuted among men!

Now, let us endeavor to enter into the meaning of our text. Thus would we handle it this morning, as God shall help us. First, let us *describe the peacemaker*; secondly, let us *proclaim his blessedness*; thirdly, let us *set him to work*; and then, fourthly, *let the preacher become a peacemaker himself*.

I. First, LET US DESCRIBE THE PEACEMAKER.

The peacemaker, while distinguished by his character, has the outward position and condition of other men. He stands in all relations of life just as other men do.

Thus, the peacemaker is a *citizen*, and though he is a Christian, he remembers that Christianity does not require him to forego his citizenship, but to use and to improve it, for Christ’s glory. The peacemaker, then, as a citizen, loves peace. If he lives in this land, he knows that he lives among a people who are very sensitive of their honor, and are speedily and easily provoked—a people who are so fierce in their character, that the very mention of war stirs their blood, and they feel as if they would go at it at once with all their force. The peacemaker remembers the war with Russia, and he recollects what fools we were that we should have meddled there, to bring

to ourselves great losses both in trade and money, and no advantage whatever that is perceptible. He knows that this nation has often been drifted into war for political purposes, and that usually, the pressure and burden of it comes upon the poor working man, upon such as have to earn their living by the sweat of their face. Therefore, though he, like other men, feels hot blood, and being born an Englishman, feels the blood of the old sea kings often in his veins, yet he represses it, and says to himself, "I must not strive, for the servant of God must be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient." So he puts his back against the current, and when he hears everywhere the noise of war, and sees many who are hot for it, he does his best to administer a cooling draught, and he says, "Be patient; let it alone; if the thing is evil, yet war is worse than any other evil. There was never a bad peace yet, and never a good war," he says, "And whatever loss we may sustain by being too quiet, we shall certainly lose a hundred times as much by being too fierce." And then, in the present case, he thinks how ill it would be for two Christian nations to go to war—two nations sprung of the same blood—two countries which really have a closer relation than any other two countries upon the face of the earth—rivals in their liberal institutions—coadjutors in propagating the gospel of Christ—two nations that have within their midst, more of the elect of God and more of the true followers of Christ, than any other nations under heaven! Yes, he thinks within himself, it was ill that the bones of our sons and daughters should go again to make manure for our fields, as they have done before. He remembers that the farmers of Yorkshire brought home the mold from Waterloo with which to manure their own fields—the blood and bones of their own sons and daughters; and he thinks it not right that the prairies of America should be enriched with the blood and bones of his children; and on the other hand, he thinks that he would not

smite another man, but would sooner be smitten of him, and that blood would be to him an awful sight. So he says, “What I would not do myself, I would not have others do for me, and if I would not be a killer, neither would I have others killed for me.” He walks in vision over a field of battle; he hears the shrieks of the dying, and the groans of the wounded; he knows, that even conquerors themselves have said, that all the enthusiasm of victory has not been able to remove the horror of the dreadful scene after the fight; and so he says, “No, peace, peace!” If he has any influence in the commonwealth, if he is a member of the House of Parliament, if he is a writer in a newspaper, or if he speaks from the platform, he says, “Let us look well to it before we hurry into this strife! We must preserve our country’s honor; we must maintain our right to entertain those who flee from their oppressors; we must maintain that England shall always be the safe home of every rebel who flies from his king, a place from which the oppressed shall never be dragged by force of arms; yet, “Still,” he says, “cannot this be, and yet no blood?” And he bids the law officers look well to it, and see if they cannot find that, perhaps, there may have been an oversight committed which may be pardoned and condoned, without the shedding of blood, without the plucking of the sword from its scabbard. Well, he says of war that it is a monster, that at its best it is a fiend, that of all scourges it is the worst; and he looks upon soldiers as the red twigs of the bloody rod, and he begs God not to smite a guilty nation thus, but to put up the sword awhile, that we be not cast into trouble, overwhelmed with sorrow, and exposed to cruelty which may bring thousands to the grave, and multitudes to poverty. Thus the peacemaker acts; and he feels that while he does so, his conscience justifies him, and he is blessed, and men shall one day acknowledge that he was one of the children of God!

But, the peacemaker is not only a citizen, but *a man*, and if sometimes he lets general politics alone, yet as a man, he thinks that the politics of his own person must always be those of peace. There, if his honor is stained, he stands not up for it—he counts that it were a greater stain to his honor for him to be angry with his fellow than for him to bear an insult. He hears others say, “If you tread upon a worm it will turn,” but he says, “I am not a worm, but a Christian, and therefore, I do not turn except to bless the hand that smites, and to pray for those who despitefully use me.” He has his temper, for the peacemaker can be angry, and woe to the man who cannot be; he is like Jacob halting on his thigh, for anger is one of the holy feet of the soul, when it goes in the right direction! But, while he can be angry, he learns to “be angry and sin not,” and “he suffers not the sun to go down upon his wrath.” When he is at home, the peacemaker seeks to be quiet with his servants and with his household; he puts up with many things sooner than he will speak one uncomely word, and if he rebukes, it is always with gentleness, saying, “Why do you do this? Why do you do this?”—not with the severity of a judge, but with the tenderness of a father! The peacemaker may learn a lesson, perhaps, from a story which I met with last week in reading the life of Mr. John Wesley. Going across in a ship to America with Mr. Oglethorpe, who was to be the governor of Savannah, he one day heard a great noise in the governor’s cabin. So Mr. Wesley went there, and the governor said, “I dare say you want to know what this noise is about, sir. I have good occasion for it. You know, sir,” he said, “that the only wine I drink is Cyprus wine, and it is necessary for me; I put it on board, and this rascal, my servant, this Grimaldi, has drunk all of it! I will have him beaten on the deck, and the first ship of war that comes by, he shall be taken by press, and enlisted in His Majesty’s service, and a hard time he shall have of it, for I will let him know that I never

forgive.” “Your Honor,” said Mr. Wesley, “then I hope you never sin.” The rebuke was so well put, so pointed, and so needed, that the governor replied in a moment, “Alas, sir, I do sin, and I have sinned in what I have said; for your sake he shall be forgiven; I trust he will never do the like again.” So the peacemaker always thinks that it is best for him, as he is a sinner himself, and responsible to his own Master, not to be too hard a master on his servants, lest when he is provoking them, he may also be provoking his God!

The peacemaker also *goes abroad*, and when he is in company he sometimes meets with slurs and even with insults, but he learns to bear these, for he remembers that Christ endured much contradiction of sinners against Himself. Holy Cotton Mather, a great Puritan divine of America, had received a number of anonymous letters, in which he was greatly abused. Having read them, and preserved them, he put a piece of paper around them, and wrote upon the paper when he put them on a shelf, “Libels—Father, forgive them!” So does the peacemaker do! He says of all these things, “They are libels—Father, forgive them!” And he does not rush to defend himself, knowing that He whom he serves will take care that his good name will be preserved, if only he himself is careful how he walks among men. He goes into business, and it sometimes happens to the peacemaker, that circumstances occur in which he is greatly tempted to go to the law; but he never does this, unless he is compelled to it, for he knows that law-work is playing with edged tools, and that they who know how to use the tools yet cut their own fingers! The peacemaker remembers that the law is most profitable to those who carry it on; he knows, too, that where men will give sixpence to the ministry for the good of their souls, and where they pay a guinea to their physician for the good of their bodies, they will spend a hundred pounds, or 500 as a refresher to their counsel in the

Court of Chancery! So he says, “No, better that I be wronged by my adversary, and he get some advantage, than that both of us should lose our all.” So he lets some of these things go by, and he finds that on the whole, he is none the loser by sometimes giving up his rights. There are times when he is compelled to defend himself, but even then, he is ready for every compromise, willing to give way at any time, and at any season. He has learned the old adage, that “An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure,” and so he takes heed to it, to agree with his adversary quickly while he is yet in the way, letting strife alone before it is meddled with, or when it is meddled with, seeking to end it as quickly as may be, as in the sight of God.

And then, the peacemaker is *a neighbor*, and though he never seeks to meddle with his neighbor's disputes, more especially if it is a dispute between his neighbor and his wife, for well he knows that if they disagree, yet they will both agree very soon to disagree with him, if he meddles between them! If he is called in when there is a dispute between two neighbors, he never excites them to animosity, but he says to them, “You do not well, my brothers; why do you strive with one another?” And though he takes not the wrong side, but seeks ever to do justice, yet he always tempers his justice with mercy, and says unto the one who is wronged, “Can not you have the nobility to forgive?” And he sometimes puts himself between the two, when they are very angry, and takes the blows from both sides, for he knows that so did Jesus, who took the blows from His Father, and from us also, so that by suffering in our place, peace might be made between God and man. Thus, the peacemaker acts whenever he is called to do his good offices, and more especially, if his station enables him to do it with authority. He endeavors, if he sits upon the judgment seat, not to bring a case to a trial, if it can be arranged otherwise. If he is a minister, and

there is a difference among his people, he enters not into the details, for well he knows that there is much idle tittle-tattle; but he says, “Peace” to the billows, and “Hush” to the winds, and so he bids men live. They have so little while, he thinks, to dwell together, that it were right they should live in harmony. And so he says, “How good and pleasant a thing it is for brothers and sisters to dwell together in unity!”

But once again, the peacemaker has for his highest title, that he is *a Christian*. Being a Christian, he unites himself with some Christian Church; and here, as a peacemaker, he is as an angel of God. Even among Churches there are those who are bowed down with infirmities, and these infirmities cause Christian men and women to differ at times. So the peacemaker says, “This is unseemly, my brother, my sister; let us be at peace.” And he remembers what Paul said, “I beseech Euodias, and I beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.” And he thinks that if these two were thus besought by Paul to be of the same mind, unity must be a blessed thing, and he labors for it! And sometimes the peacemaker, when he sees differences likely to arise between his denomination and others, turns to the history of Abram, and he reads how the herdsman of Abram did strive with the herdsman of Lot. And he notes that in the same verse it is said, “And the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled in the land.” So he thinks it was a shame that where there were Perizzites to look on, followers of the true God should disagree! He says to Christians, “Do not do this, for we make the devil sport; we dishonor God; we damage our own cause; we ruin the souls of men!” And he says, “Put up your swords into your scabbards; be at peace and fight not one with another.” They, who are not peacemakers, when received into a Church, will fight upon the smallest notion; will differ about the minutest point. We have known Churches torn in pieces, and schisms committed in Christian bodies through

things so foolish that a wise man could not perceive the occasion; things so ridiculous that a reasonable man would have overlooked them! The peacemaker says, “Follow peace with all men.” Specially he prays that the Spirit of God, who is the Spirit of peace, might rest upon the Church at all times, banding believers together in one, that they being one in Christ, the world may know that the Father has sent His Son into the world, heralded as His mission was, with an angelic song—“glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, good will toward men.”

Now, I trust in the description which I have given of the peacemaker, I may have described some of you; but I fear the most of us would have to say, “Well, in many things I come short.” However, this much I would add. If there are two Christians here present, who are at variance with each other, I would be a peacemaker and bid them be peacemakers, too! Two Spartans had quarreled with each other, and the Spartan king, Aris, bade them both meet him in a temple. When they were both there, he heard their differences; and he said to the priest, “Lock the doors of the temple; these two shall never go forth till they are as one,” and there, within the temple, he said, “It is not right to differ.” So they compounded at once their differences, and went away. If this were done in an *idol temple*, much more let it be done in the house of God! And if the Spartan heathen did this, much more let the Christian, the believer in Christ do it! This very day, put aside from you all bitterness and all malice, and say one to another, “If in anything you have offended me, it is forgiven; and if in anything I have offended you, I confess my error; let the breach be healed, and as children of God, let us be in union with one another.” Blessed are they who can do this, for “Blessed are the peacemakers!”

II. Having thus described the peacemaker, I shall go on to **DECLARE HIS BLESSEDNESS**. “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.” A three-fold commendation is implied!

First, he is *blessed*; that is, God blesses him, and I know that he whom God blesses is blessed—and he whom God curses, is cursed! God blesses him from the highest heavens; God blesses him in a godlike manner; God blesses him with the abundant blessings which are treasured up in Christ.

And while he is blessed of God, the blessedness is diffused through his own soul. His conscience bears witness that as in the sight of God through the Holy Spirit, he has sought to honor Christ among men. More especially is he most blessed when he has been most assailed with curses, for then the assurance greets him, “So persecuted they the prophets that were before you.” And whereas he has a command to rejoice at all times, yet he finds a special command to be exceedingly glad when he is illtreated. Therefore, he takes it well, if for well-doing he is called to suffer, and he rejoices thus to bear a part of the Savior’s cross. He goes to his bed; no dreams of enmity disturb his sleep; he rises and goes to his business, and he fears not the face of any man, for he can say, “I have not in my heart anything but friendship towards all.” Or if he is attacked with slander, and his enemies have forged a lie against him, he can nevertheless say—

“He that forged, and he that threw the dart,
Has each a brother’s interest in my heart.”

Loving all, he is thus peaceful in his own soul, and he is blessed as one who inherits the blessing of the Most High!

And, not infrequently, it comes to pass that he is even blessed by the wicked; for though they would withhold a good

word from him, they cannot. Overcoming evil with good, he heaps coals of fire upon their heads, and melts the coldness of their enmity, till even they say, “He is a good man.” And when he dies, those whom he has made at peace with one another, say over his tomb, “It were well if the world should see many of his like; there were not half the strife, nor half the sin in it, if there were many more like he.”

Secondly, you will observe that the text not only says he is blessed; but, it adds, that *he is one of the children of God*. This he is by adoption and grace; but peacemaking is a sweet evidence of the work of the peaceful Spirit within. As the child of God, moreover, he has a likeness to his Father who is in heaven. God is peaceful, long-suffering, and tender, full of loving kindness, pity, and compassion. So is this peacemaker. Being like God, he bears his Father's image. Thus does he testify to men, that he is one of God's children; as one of God's children, the peacemaker has access to his Father. He goes to Him with confidence, saying, “Our Father which are in heaven,” which he dare not say unless he could plead with a clear conscience. “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” He feels the tie of brotherhood with man, and therefore, he feels that he may rejoice in the Fatherhood of God! He comes with confidence and with intense delight to his Father who is in heaven, for he is one of the children of the Highest, who does good both to the unthankful and to the evil.

And still, there is a third word of commendation in the text. “They shall be *called* the children of God.” They not only are so, but they shall be called so. That is, even their enemies shall call them so, even the world shall say, “Ah, that man is a child of God.” Perhaps, beloved, there is nothing that so strikes the ungodly as the peaceful behavior of a Christian under insult! There was a soldier in India, a big fellow, who had been, before he enlisted, a prizefighter, and afterwards had performed many

deeds of valor. When he had been converted through the preaching of a missionary, all his messmates made a laughingstock of him. They counted it impossible that such a man as he had been should become a peaceful Christian. So one day, when they were at mess, one of them wantonly threw into his face and bosom a whole basinful of scalding soup. The poor man tore his clothes open to wipe away the scalding liquid, and yet self-possessed amidst his excitement, he said, "I am a Christian, I must expect this," and smiled at them. The one who did it said, "If I had thought you would have taken it in that way, I would never have done it; I am very sorry I ever did so." His patience rebuked their malice, and they all said he was a Christian. Thus he was called a child of God. They saw in him evidence that was to them the more striking, because they knew that they could not have done the same. When Mr. Kilpin, of Exeter, was one day walking along the streets, an evil man pushed him from the pavement into the ditch, and as he fell into the ditch, the man said, "Lay there, John Bunyan, that is good enough for you." Mr. Kilpin got up and went on his way, and when afterwards this man wanted to know how he took the insult, he was surprised that all Mr. Kilpin said was that he had done him more honor than dishonor, for he thought that being called John Bunyan was worth being rolled in the ditch a thousand times! Then he who had done this said that he was a good man, so that they, who are peacemakers, are "called the children of God." They demonstrate to the world in such a way, that the very blind must see, and the very deaf must hear that God is in them! O that we had graces enough to win this blessed commendation! If God has brought you far enough, my hearer, to hunger and thirst after righteousness, I pray you never cease your hunger till He has brought you so far as to be a peacemaker, that you may be called a child of God!

III. But now, in the third place, I am to try and SET THE PEACEMAKER TO WORK.

You have much work to do, I doubt not, in your own households and your own circles of acquaintance. Go and do it! You remember well that text in Job—"Can that which is unsavory be eaten without salt? Or is there any taste in the white of an egg?"—by which Job would have us know that unsavory things must have something else with them, or else they will not well be pleasant for food. Now, our religion is an unsavory thing to men—we must put salt with it, and this salt must be our quietness and peace-making disposition! Then they, who would have shunned our religion alone, will say of it, when they see the salt with it, "This is good," and they will find some relish in this "white of an egg." If you would commend your godliness to the sons of men, in your own houses make clear and clean work, purging out the old leaven, that you may offer sacrifices to God of a godly and heavenly sort! If you have any strifes among you, or any divisions, I pray you, even as God, for Christ's sake, forgave you, so also do you. By the bloody sweat of Him who prayed for you, and by the agonies of Him who died for you, and in dying said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," forgive your enemies! "Pray for them who despitefully use you, and bless them who curse you." Let it be always said of you, as a Christian, "That man is meek and lowly in heart, and would sooner bear injury himself than cause an injury to another."

But, the chief work I want to set you about is this. Jesus Christ was the greatest of all peacemakers. "He is our peace." He came to make peace with Jew and Gentile, "For He has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us." He came to make peace between all striving nationalities, for we are "no more Greek, barbarian, Scythian, neither bond nor free, but Christ is all-in-all." He came

to make peace between His Father's justice, and our offending souls, and He has made peace for us through the blood of His cross. Now, you who are the sons of peace, endeavor as instruments in His hands to make peace between God and men! For your children's souls, let your earnest prayers go up to heaven. For the souls of all your acquaintance and kinsfolk let your supplications never cease! Pray for the salvation of your perishing fellow creatures. Thus will you be peacemakers. And when you have prayed, use all the means within your power. Preach, if God has given you the ability; preach with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven—the reconciling word of life! Teach, if you cannot preach. Teach the Word. "Be instant in season and out of season." "Sow beside all waters," for the gospel "speaks better things than the blood of Abel," and cries peace to the sons of men! Write to your friends of Christ; and if you cannot speak much, speak a little for Him. And oh, make it the objective of your life to win others for Christ! Never be satisfied with going to heaven alone! Ask the Lord that you may be the spiritual father of many children, and that God may bless you to the ingathering of much of the Redeemer's harvest. I thank God that there are so many among you who are alive to the love of souls. It makes my heart glad to hear of conversions and to receive the converts; but I feel most glad when many of you, converted by my own instrumentality, under God, are made the means of the conversion of others! There are brothers and sisters here who bring me constantly those who have been brought first to this house by them, over whom they watched and prayed, and at last have brought them to the minister, that he may hear their confession of faith! Blessed are such peacemakers! You have "saved a soul from death, and hidden a multitude of sins." "They who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever." They, indeed, in heaven itself "shall be called the children of God."

The genealogy of that book, in which the names of all the Lord's people are written, shall record that through God the Holy Spirit they have brought souls into the bond of peace through Jesus Christ!

IV. The minister has now, in the last place, TO PRACTICE HIS OWN TEXT, AND ENDEAVOR THROUGH GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT TO BE A PEACEMAKER THIS MORNING.

I speak to many a score of persons this morning who know nothing of peace; for “there is no peace, says my God, to the wicked.” “The wicked are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.” I speak not to you with any desire of making a false peace with your souls. Woe to the prophets who say, “Peace, peace, when there is no peace!” Rather let me, first of all, that we may make sound work in this matter, expose the peaceless, the warring state of your soul.

O, soul! You are this morning at war with your conscience. You have tried to quiet it, but it *will* prick you. You have shut up this recorder of the town of Mansoul in a dark place, and you have built a wall before his door; but still, when his fits are on him, your conscience will thunder at you and say, “This is not right; this is the path that leads to hell; this is the road of destruction!” Oh, there are some of you to whom conscience is as a ghost, haunting you by day and night. You know the good, though you choose the evil; you prick your fingers with the thorns of conscience when you try to pluck the rose of sin. To you the downward path is not an easy one; it is hedged up and ditched up, and there are many bars and gates and chains on the road, but you climb over them, determined to ruin your own souls! Oh, there is war between you and conscience. Conscience says, “Turn;” but, you say, “I will not.” Conscience says, “Close your shop on Sunday.” Conscience says, “Alter this system of trade, it is cheating.” Conscience says, “Lie not one to another, for the Judge is at the door.” Conscience says,

“Away with that drinking cup, it makes the man into something worse than a brute.” Conscience says, “Tear yourself from that unchaste connection; have done with that evil; bolt your door against lust.” But, you say, “I will drink the sweet though it damns me; I will go still to my cups and to my haunts, though I perish in my sins.” There is war between you and your conscience! Still, your conscience is God’s vice-regent in your soul. Let conscience speak a moment or two this morning. Fear him not; he is a good friend to you, and though he speaks roughly, the day will come when you will know that there is more music in the very roaring of conscience than in all the sweet and siren tones which lust adopts to cheat you to your ruin! Let your conscience speak.

But more, there is war between you and God’s law. The ten commandments are against you this morning. The first one comes forward and says, “Let him be cursed, for he denies Me! He has another God besides Me; his God is his belly, he yields homage to his lust.” All the ten commandments, like ten great pieces of cannon are pointed at you today for you have broken all God’s statutes, and lived in the daily neglect of all His commands! Soul, you will find it a hard thing to go to war with the law! When the law came in peace, Sinai was altogether on a smoke, and even Moses said, “I do exceedingly fear and quake.” What will you do when the law comes in terror, when the trumpet of the archangel shall tear you from your grave, when the eyes of God shall burn their way into your guilty soul, when the great books shall be opened and all your sin and shame shall be published? Can you stand against an angry law in that day? When the officers of the law shall come forth to deliver you up to the tormentors, and cast you away forever from peace and happiness, sinner, what will you do? Can you dwell with everlasting fires? Can you abide the eternal burning? O man, “Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are in the way

with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver you to the judge, and the judge deliver you to the officer, and you be cast into prison. Verily I say unto you, you shall by no means come out from there till you have paid the uttermost farthing.”

But, sinner, do you know that you are this morning at war with God? He who made you and was your best friend, you have forgotten and neglected! He has fed you, and you have used your strength against Him. He has clothed you—the clothes you have upon your back today are the livery of His goodness—yet, instead of being the servant of Him whose clothes you wear, you are the slave of His greatest enemy! The very breath in your nostrils is the loan of His charity, and yet you use that breath perhaps to curse Him, or at the best, in lasciviousness or loose conversation, to do dishonor to His laws. He who made you has become your enemy through your sin, and you are still today hating Him and despising His Word. You say, “I do not hate Him!” soul, I charge you then, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.” “No,” you say, “I cannot, I will not do that!” Then you hate Him! If you loved Him, you would keep this, His great command. “His commandment is not difficult,” it is sweet and easy. You would believe in His Son if you did love the Father, for “He who loves the Father loves Him also that is begotten of Him.” Are you thus at war with God? Surely this is a sorry plight for you to be in! Can you meet Him who comes against you with ten thousand? Can you stand against Him who is Almighty, who makes heaven shake at His reproof, and breaks the crooked serpent with a word? Do you hope to hide from Him? “Can any hide in secret places, that I shall not see him?” says the Lord. Though you dig in Carmel, yet will He pluck you from there; though you dive into the caverns of the sea, there shall He command the crooked serpent, and it shall bite you. If you make your bed in hell, He will find you out. If you climb to heaven, He is there. Creation

is your prison, and He can find you when He will. Or do you think you can endure His fury? Are your ribs of iron? Are your bones brass? If they are so, yet shall they melt like wax before the coming of the Lord God of hosts, for He is mighty, and as a lion shall He tear in pieces His prey, and as a fire shall He devour His adversary, “For our God is a consuming fire.”

This, then, is the state of every unconverted man and woman in this place this morning. You are at war with your conscience, at war with God’s law, and at war with God Himself. And, now, then, as God’s ambassador, I come to speak of peace. I beseech you give heed. “As though God did beseech you by me, I pray you, in Christ’s place, be you reconciled to God.” “In Christ’s place”! Let the preacher vanish for a moment. Look and listen! It is Christ speaking to you now! I think I hear Him speak to some of you. This is the way He speaks, “Soul, I love you; I love you from My heart; I would not have you at enmity with My Father.” The tears prove the truth of what He states, while He cries, “How often would I have gathered you, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wing, but you would not.” “Yet,” He says, “I come to speak with you of peace. Come, now, and let us reason together. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Sinner,” He says, “you are bid now to hear God’s note of peace to your soul, for thus it runs—‘You are guilty and condemned; will you confess this? Are you willing to throw down your weapons now, and say, Great God, I yield, I yield, I would no longer be Your foe?’” If so, peace is proclaimed to you! “Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord, for He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” Pardon is freely presented to every soul that unfeignedly repents of its sin; but that pardon must come to you through *faith*. So Jesus stands here this morning, points to

the wounds upon His breast, and spreads His bleeding hands. And He says, "Sinner, trust in Me and live!" God proclaims to you no longer His fiery law, but His sweet, His simple gospel believe and live. "He who believes on the Son is not condemned; but he who believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whoever believes on Him should not perish, but have eternal life." O, soul, does the Spirit of God move in you this morning? Do you say, "Lord, I would be at peace with You?" Are you willing to take Christ on His own terms, and they are no terms at all—they are simply that you should make no terms in the matter, but give yourself up, body, soul and spirit, to be saved of Him? Now, if my Master were visibly here, I think He would plead with you in such a way that many of you would say, "Lord, I believe; I would be at peace with You." But even Christ Himself never converted a soul apart from the Holy Spirit, and even He as a preacher won not many to Him, for they were hard of heart. If the Holy Spirit is here, He may as much bless you when I plead in Christ's place as though He pleaded Himself! Soul, will you have Christ or not? Young men, young women, you may never hear this word preached in your ears again! Will you die at enmity against God? You who are sitting here, still unconverted, your last hour may come, before another Sabbath's sun shall dawn. You may never see another morrow! Would you go into eternity, "enemies to God by wicked works?" Soul, will you have Christ or not? Say "No," if you mean it. Say "No, Christ, I will never be saved by You." Say it! Look the matter in the face! But I pray you do not say, "I will make no answer." Come, give some answer this morning—yes, this morning! Thank God you can give an answer. Thank God that you are not in hell! Thank God that

your sentence has not been pronounced—that you have not received your due deserts. God help you to give the right answer! Will you have Christ or not? “I am not fit.” There is no question of fitness; it is only, will you have Him? “I am black with sin.” He will come into your black heart and clean it! “Oh, but I am hard-hearted.” He will come into your hard heart and soften it! Will you have Him? You can have Him if you will! When *God makes a soul willing*, it is a clear proof that He means to give that soul Christ! And if you are willing, He is not unwilling! If He has made you willing, you may have Him!

“Oh,” says one, “I cannot even *think* that I might have Christ.” Soul, you may have Him now! Mary, He calls you! John, He calls you! Sinner, whoever you may be out of this great throng, if there is in your soul this morning a holy willingness towards Christ; yes, or if there is even a faint *desire* towards Him, He calls you, He calls you! O, tarry not, but come and trust in Him. Oh, if I had such a gospel as this to preach to lost souls in hell, what an effect it would have upon them! Surely, surely, if they could once more have the gospel preached in their ears, I think the tears would bedew their poor cheeks, and they would say, “Great God, if we may but escape from Your wrath, we will lay hold on Christ.” But here it is, preached among *you*, preached every day, till I fear it is listened to as an old, old story! Perhaps it is my poor way of telling it; but God knows if I knew how to tell it better, I would do so! O, my Master, send a better ambassador to these men and women, if that will woo them! Send a more earnest pleader, and a more tender heart if that will bring them to You! But oh, bring them, bring them! Our heart longs to see them brought! Sinner, will you have Christ or not? I know this morning is the day of God’s power to some of your souls! The Holy Spirit is striving with some of you! Lord, will them! Conquer them! Overcome them! Do you say, “Yes, happy day! I would be led in triumph, captive to my

Lord's great love"? Soul, if so, it is done if you believe! Trust Christ and your many sins are all forgiven you—cast yourself before His dear cross and say—

“A guilty, weak and helpless worm,
Into Your arms I fall;
Be You my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my all.”

And if He rejects you, come tell me of it! If He refuses you, let me hear about it! There was never such a case yet! He always has received those who come. He always will! He is an open-handed and an openhearted Savior. O sinner! May God bring you to put your trust in Him once and for all! Spirits above! Tune your harps anew! There is a sinner born to God this morning! Lead the song, O Saul of Tarsus! And follow the sinner with sweetest music, O Mary! Let music roll up before the throne today; for there are heirs of glory born, and prodigals *have* returned! To God be the glory forever and ever! Amen.

**423 THE WEEDING OF THE GARDEN – MATT.
15:13**

**A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Evening, December 8th, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington**

**“But He answered and said, Every plant which My heavenly
Father has not planted will be uprooted.” — Matthew 15:13**

JESUS CHRIST had spoken certain truths of God which were highly objectionable to the Pharisees. Some of His loving disciples were greatly frightened, and they came to Him and said, “Know you not that the Pharisees are offended?” Now, our Savior, instead of making any apology for having offended the Pharisees, took it as a matter of course, and replied in a sentence which is well worthy to be called a proverb—“Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted.” Now, we have, oftentimes, as Mathew Henry very tritely remarks, a number of good and affectionate but very weak hearers. They are always afraid that we shall offend other hearers. Hence, if the truth of God is spoken in a plain and pointed manner, and seems to come close to home to the conscience, they think that surely it ought not to have been spoken, because So-and-So, and So-and-So, and So-and-So took offense at it! Truly, my brothers, we are not all slow to answer in this matter! If we never offended, it would be proof positive that we did not *preach the gospel!* They who can please man will find it quite another thing to have pleased God. Do

you suppose that men will love those who faithfully rebuke them? If you make the sinner's heart groan, and waken his conscience, do you think he will pay you court and thank you for it? No, not so! In fact, this ought to be one aim of our ministry, not to offend, but to test men and make them offended with themselves, so that their hearts may be exposed to their own inspection. Their being offended will make known of what sort they are. A ministry that never uproots will never water; a ministry that does not pull down will never build up. He who knows not how to pluck up the plants which God has not planted, scarcely understands how to be a worker of God in His vineyard! Our ministry ought always to be a killing as well as healing one—a ministry which kills all false hopes, blights all wrong confidences, and weeds out all foolish trusts, while at the same time it trains up the feeblest shoot of real hope, and tends comfort and encouragement even to the weakest of the sincere followers of Christ. Do not, then, be needlessly alarmed about our ministry! Just give us plenty of elbow room to strike right and left. Let not our friends encumber us. Whether they are friends or foes, when we have to strike for God and His truth, we cannot spare whoever may stand in our way! To our own Master we stand or fall, but to no one else in heaven or on earth!

Well now, our Savior was thus led from the remark of His disciples to utter this memorable proverbial saying. If we understand it right, it applies to every doctrine and to every false system of religion. Whatever God has not planted will be uprooted! As for heretical teachers; let them alone; they are blind leaders of the blind, and if the blind lead the blind, they shall both fall into the ditch! Many good people are greatly concerned about the growth of papacy in England. They fear the day will come when papacy shall have quenched the light of gospel grace. I trust, my brothers and sisters in Christ, you

will not get nervous upon that point! It is of little consequence what men are if they are not saved, if they are not brought to know the Lord. I do not know that it is a very important item what kind of religion they have if they have not got the true one. They may receive the awful doom of unbelievers in Christ, and enemies to the gospel, as Romanists or Muslims; or like too many in this land being merely professing Christians who deceive themselves and others; they may incur the same wrath of God, and inherit the same condemnation. But do not think for a moment that the harlot of the seven hills will ever prevail against the bride of Christ! Not she! The Lord will, by-and-by, when her iniquity is full, utterly destroy her! Only be sure in your heart that God has not planted it, and you may be equally sure that He will pluck it up! Prophets may plant it with their pretended revelations, martyrs may water it with their blood, confessor after confessor may defend it with his learning, and with his courage, time may endear it, literature may protect it, and kings may keep guard about it, but He who rules in the heavens, and cares nothing for human might, shall certainly grasp its trunk, and, pulling it up, even though it is strong as a cedar, shall hurl it into the fire because He has not planted it! Yes, every hoary system of superstition, every ancient form of idolatry, every venerable species of will-worship, shall be as certainly overturned, as God is true. Leave them alone; be not over-anxious. He shall come, by-and-by, who shall cry, “Overturn, overturn; overturn!” And He shall pluck up by the roots everything which His own hand has not planted. The advice of the Jewish orator was very sensible, when he said concerning certain men, “Refrain from these men, and let them alone, for if this counsel or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it.” When you see a new enterprise, some brother very enthusiastically attempting something you cannot quite approve of, do not

stand in their way! Let them have a fair trial; there is one at the helm who understands how to manage better than we do. Let them alone; if God has not the work in hand, it will come to nothing, and if it should be God's work, then, surely it will stand! I am so constantly referred to for advice from all parts of the country that I am very often in the position of the Delphic oracle—not wishing to give wrong advice, and, therefore, hardly able to give any! Among others, some time ago, I had an inquiry from a brother as to whether he ought to preach or not. His minister told him he ought not, and yet, he felt he must; so I thought I would be safe, and I said to him just this—"My brother, if God has opened your mouth the devil cannot shut it, but if the devil has opened it, I pray the Lord to shut it directly." I was quite certain to be safe there. He took it as an encouragement to preach on. I think we may say the like with regard to all modern enterprises. Whenever a brother comes with something new that is to revive the Church and to do good, we may say, "Well, if God has opened your mouth, I will not help Satan to shut it; but if Satan has opened your mouth, may God shut it; but it is not mine to do that work; I must leave it to Him; to your own Master you shall stand or fall."

But, while I have no doubt that this is the drift of the text, and what the Savior specially aimed at, yet, beyond a doubt, we may read this sentence as having reference to our own souls. And here, may the Spirit of God give to us a deep solemnity of spirit, that we may be led to ask ourselves, and to honestly answer the inquiry, whether we are plants of God's right hand planting or not. May God the Holy Spirit have personal dealings with many of our souls tonight, and may this be a heart-searching and rein-trying hour!

First, I shall have something to say about those *plants that God has not planted*. Secondly, we will consider a little about *their*

being uprooted. And then, we will come to the *examination as to whether we are plants that God has planted.*

I. The Greek word not only signifies plants—for you know we are in the habit of calling a thing a plant which grows in the woods—but the Greek word has nicer discrimination. As Tyndal very well remarks, it is not merely a plant, but a root that has been designed to be put into the ground and taken care of. We must not only be comparable to living plants; but we must be comparable to those which come under the gardener's care, which are planted in the soil, tended by his skill, and looked upon with interest as being his own. Now, there are many professors who are like wild plants; they were never planted by any servant of God, much less by God Himself! They are thorns and briers; they bring forth wild fruits that are noxious, bitter, poisonous, acrid, and deadly to the taste. They grow in abundance. This London is like some wild field that is covered with its ferns and shrubs and even with something worse than these—wild plants that spring up spontaneously! Now, these will have to be uprooted. When the day comes for God to clear His commons, there will be a blaze indeed, when He shall say, "Gather them together in bundles to burn; but gather the wheat into My garner." The drunk, the swearer, the adulterer; those who live by cheating and robbing their neighbors; those who never darken the walls of God's sanctuary; those to whom Sunday is the busiest day in the week; those who are without God and without hope, and without Christ, these we may call self-sown plants, uncared for, untutored, and they must be uprooted, for He will say, "Gather out of My kingdom all things that offend, and they who do iniquity."

There are other plants, however, that have evidently been planted by *some* hand. Some have been planted by *the minister's hand*. There are the signs and marks about them that some

pruning-knife has been at work. You know to what I refer. We all of us have some converts. God has His thousands I hope, in this place; but I have some of my own here who I could do better without! A man's converts are always a disgrace to him! It is only those who God converts who will last. When we go fresh into a place, there are always a number of people who hear with a degree of profit, and who are affected by us. But let that minister be taken away, and they go back again! One wave washes them up on the shore, and the return wave sucks them back again into the great deeps! Why, see how it was with this congregation in years gone by, when they were smaller and fewer in numbers. When my worthy predecessor, Mr. James Smith, preached the Word, there were a number of those who professed conversion; and what became of many when he went away, God alone knows; though we found some of them no better than they should be. And if I should die, there would be some of you who would do the same! Take away the leader, and the soldier slinks back into his quarters. He has no objection to follow his captain while he sees him; but the man being the captain, if the standard-bearer falls, then he takes himself out of the conflict, and is seen no more! I do not know who planted you; but if you are only planted by man, though he would be the best man that ever lived, you will be uprooted. If your conversion is only human, if you are only brought to God by mere moral persuasion, and have never been operated upon by the holy, divine, supernatural energy of the Holy Spirit, you will go back like the dog to his vomit, and like the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire!

There are some, too, who were not planted by ministers—they were *planted by their fathers and mothers*. They have got a kind of *family religion*. Well, I like to see the child follow his parent when the parent walks in the footsteps of Christ. It is a blessed thing when the old oak falls off to see half-a-dozen saplings

sprung up around the spot where he stood. But we must remember that we have nothing to do with hereditary godliness, for hereditary godliness is not worth a straw! We must be *personally* saved. We cannot be saved in our father's loins. What if the blood of martyrs is in my veins tonight, and if I traced back my pedigree, as I might do through a hue of preachers of the Word—what does it matter if I myself make shipwreck concerning faith, and am a castaway? It shall be but the sorer condemnation for a child of the saints to perish as an heir of wrath! Ah, there are many of you who have fathers and mothers in the Church who look for your everlasting welfare with anxious desire. I pray you do not imagine that your father's religion will save you! We will not baptize you if you should have that thought in your head! Till you have got religion of your own, we have nothing to do with you. Not until you have a personal faith dare we give you a baptism. We would not have you make a profession by proxy, nor would we have profession made for you while you are an unconscious baby! True religion is personal to every man, woman, or child; it is a matter of his own consciousness; he must, in his own soul, be lost or be saved. The battle of life can be fought in no battlefield but in our own personal consciousness, and he who attempts to shift the work or to shift the responsibility to another, goes on a fool's errand! And he will surely fail in it. If you have not been planted thus, you will be uprooted!

And oh, how many there are of even professors of religion who are self-planted! By their own good deeds, and their own efforts, and their own strivings, and their own praying, they hope to be saved; and having an experience which was not worked in them, but which they borrowed from books, they have come, and oftentimes they have deceived the minister and been added to the Church! Ah, souls, you may paint yourselves as you will, but unless you have the genuine matter, you will

never be able to pass the judgment seat of God. You may gild and varnish, but He will say, “Take it away,” and like the painted face of Jezebel, which the dogs did eat, despite the paint, so shall you yourselves be utterly devoured— despite the fair picture that you made! There may be some such in this Church. Human judgment cannot discover them. May the candle of the Lord search them out tonight! Soul, a homespun religion and a homemade godliness will fail us; we must have that which is the workmanship of God by the Holy Spirit. “Except a man is born-again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,” and “Except a man is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Take care, you self-planted trees, lest when the Master comes by, He shall say, “How came that plant there? I never put it in the garden; pluck it up!” And He shall throw it over the wall of the garden, just as the gardeners throw away their rubbish which is afterwards gathered up and burned in the fire!

Before I leave this point, I want to say two or three things. I speak in humble language, so that I may be understood, for in these solemn matters any soaring after fine language is but mocking the souls of men. Let me just notice that some of those plants that God never did plant are very *beautiful*. If you go into the fields, there are many plants that grow there that are quite as lovely as those in the garden. Look at the foxglove and the dog rose; look at many of the blossoms we pass by as insignificant, they are really beautiful; but they are not plants that have ever been planted. Now, how many we have in our congregations who are really beautiful, yet, they are none of God's planting—men and women whose character is upright, whose manners are amiable, whose life is irreproachable. They are not immoral, they neither cheat nor lie; but they are exemplary; their disposition is kind, tender-hearted and affectionate. Yes, but my dear hearer, there must be something

more than this, for Jesus says, “Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted.” Though it is a lovely plant, though it seem to be a fair flower externally, yet, since the root of it has sucked its nourishment out of the wild wastes of sin, whether of infidelity or of lawlessness, it is evil in the eyes of God—and it must be plucked up!

Further, how many there are of our wild wood plants *that even bring forth fruit*. The schoolboy in the country can tell us that the forest is an orchard, and that often he has had many a luscious meal from those wild fruits that grow there. Yet, mark you, though the birds may come and satisfy their hunger from those wild fruits, and though the seeds may be in the winter the sparrow’s garner, and the linnet’s storehouse, yet they are not planted, and they do not come under the description of the text—plants that have been *planted*. So, too, there may be some of you who really do some good in the world. Without you a mother’s needs might not be provided; from your table many of the poor are fed. Oh, this is good, this is good! I would that all of you did more of it, but I pray you remember that this is not enough! There must be God’s planting in you or else the fruits you bring forth will be selfish fruits! You will be like Israel who was denounced as being an empty vine, because he brought forth fruit unto himself! Charity is good. Noble charity, be you honored among men! But there must be *faith*, and if we have no faith in Christ, though we give our bodies to be burned, and bestow our goods to feed the poor, yet where Christ is, we certainly can never go.

And I would hint just once more, that many of those wild plants have *very strong roots*. If you were to go and try to dig them up, you would have a task before you not easily accomplished! Look at the wild dock—have you ever tried to pull it up? Piece after piece it breaks away, and you have to send some sharp instrument deep into the soil before you can root it out, and

even then, if there is but a piece left, it springs up and thrives again! Oh, how many there are who have as much tenacity of life in their false confidence as there is in the dock—in its root! Some of you cannot shake. “I never have a doubt,” said one, “I never had a doubt or a misgiving.” You remember Robert Hall said, “Allow me to doubt *for you*, sir,” because he knew the man to be a fornicator. And so we have some—they are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men; they speak with an air of satisfaction; their language sounds like assurance, but it is presumption! It looks like confidence in Christ, but it is confidence in themselves! And such will strike their roots very deep, and they will be very strong indeed, so that you cannot shake them; yet, alas for them, they are not plants of the Lord’s right-hand planting, and, therefore, the sentence is passed; and before long it shall be executed without pity—“They will be uprooted.”

II. And now, very briefly indeed, upon my second point—for time will fail us if we dwell long upon it—**THEIR UPROOTING.**

This uprooting sometimes comes in this life. Perhaps they are tempted, and they foully fall; or persecution comes, and they desert the standard by which they swore to stand or die. Or if not, they come to die, and then death comes and takes hold of their profession, and strikes it to and fro like some great giant who is able to lift up an oak by its roots. Perhaps for weeks the man holds his confidence and says, “It is well with me! It is well with me!” And we have known some plants with the roots so deep that Death himself could not tear them up! They have died deceived, they have perished with a false hope, and they have gone into the next world dreaming of heaven, and expecting to see the face of God. But oh, their mistake! “Where am I?” said the soul, “This is not heaven!” And the mask was pulled off, and the man saw himself all loathsome

and leprous, and he said, “I thought I was fair and lovely.” Some rude hand plucked off his garment, and he saw his running sores and ulcers, and he said, “I thought I was soundly healed.” And he heard the voice of conscience saying, “You hypocrite! God never had a work in your soul—you did deceive yourself; you did mislead yourself into a pretended hope, and now where are you? The songs of the sanctuary changed for the wailings of hell; your sittings at the Lord’s Table end in sorrowful feasts at the table of devils! Cast out, lost, banished, because God never planted you, therefore, are you plucked up.”

III. This leads me to my final task—the **WORK OF SELF-EXAMINATION.**

Dear friends, let not any aged; confirmed Christians here stand back from self-examination! Minister, you, too! O my own soul, and you, deacon, elder, aged professor—let each man among us put himself into the scale. Am I or am I not a plant of the Lord’s right-hand planting? Well then, first and foremost, if I am a plant of the Lord’s planting, *there was a time when I had to be taken out of the place where I once grew.* Can I remember a time when He dug about me and dug me up till the roots of my heart began to bleed; my soul was loosened from the earth, and the soil which it had loved, and though I did cling tenaciously to it, yet was I drawn out by superior power, taken out of the kingdom of darkness, and separated from the earthiness of my own works and self-righteousness. Can I remember that? Yes, blessed be God, some of us can say, “I can.” “One thing I know, whereas I was once blind now I see.” “Old things have passed away, behold all things have become new.” There must be a change. No matter how moral you may have been, there must be a change! There must be a change, too, which you can feel yourself, even though others cannot see it. And when such a change does not amount—I will not merely say to the change in a sick man when he gets

well, but to the change in a dead man when he comes to life—if there is no such change as this, we must fear that we are not plants of the Lord's planting!

Again, if I have been planted by God, I do most thoroughly and unfeignedly mourn that I ever was anything but what I am, and I do most heartily pant to be made like Christ, and to be conformed unto His image. If you have any love in your heart towards sin so as to willingly choose it, take care that you deceive not yourself as to the love of God being in you! He who is saved hates sin and loathes it, and though he commits sin, it is by infirmity, and even when his will gives consent to the sin, yet it gives a still deeper and more confident assent unto the law, and after it has sinned, it mourns and bemoans itself exceedingly on account of sin. If you saw a fish in a tree, you would know it was not in its element, and if you see a Christian in sin, you will be able to discover that he is not in his element. If sin is a pleasure to you, if you can sail down its stream and rejoice in it, can drink its draughts, and make merry with those who make merry therein—then deceive not yourself, for you are not a plant of the Lord's righthand planting!

Again, if you are such as God has made you, then you have learned your utter helplessness and emptiness apart from Christ as your righteousness, and the Spirit of God as your strength. Have you anything of your own to boast of? He never planted you! Have you done anything that you can bring before God and claim as your own? He has had no dealings with you! About this we are quite sure, for here the Lord makes clean work. Self-righteousness must not merely be wounded in the leg; it must have its brains dashed out, and he who still clings to himself, and his strength and his works, has to begin anew, for he has not yet begun in God's way.

Another essential mark of the plants of God's planting is that they are all planted in one soil, and, strange to say, all on a

rock. They, whom God has planted, put their trust *only* in Jesus! They have not the shadow or a shade of a suspicion of an idea of a hope anywhere but in Christ! They say of Christ's wounds, "They are the clefts of the rock in which we hide ourselves." They say of Christ's blood, "This has cleansed our sins." They say of Christ, Himself, "He is our law." They say of His presence, "It is our delight." They say of His gospel, "It is our joy." They say of His heaven, "It is our sure and everlasting reward." I would that we had longer time—I knew not that the time was speeding at so great a rate—I would we had longer time to be testing and trying ourselves in this matter; but Scripture is so explicit as to what a believer is, and what he is not, that I need not enlarge. I would rather stir up your hearts to make sure work here. Professor, what if you should be deceived? If you should be, do not say, "But." I tell you again, it is possible, for others have been deceived. I beseech you, suppose it possible! O that you may say in your soul, "Well, if it is possible, if I am deceived, yet I am a sinner, and as a sinner I will go to Christ afresh tonight! If I am not a saint, I am a sinner; and 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief,' so I will go to Him again!" But if you refuse to say this, I will put the "iP" again. Jonathan Edwards remarks that in the great revival in New England, there were sinners of all sorts converted, except unconverted professors. And, he says, "These unconverted professors are in the most dangerous state in which men can be." Well, take that warning to yourselves! Some of you say, "But I am not a professor." Ah, but you are always here, and people consider you such. Though you are not baptized, and do not join the Church, yet, your constantly coming here identifies you with us, and they consider that you made a profession; and so you did after a sort. Mark this; if you are still unconverted, and keep on

attending the means of grace year after year, you are getting into a more dangerous state. It is not often we hear of men being converted when they have been hearing the Word 20 or 30 years without its having taken effect. Do then, I pray you, try yourselves! Make sure work for eternity! Build with stone and not with plaster; build on the rock, and not on the sand. “I counsel you that you buy of Me gold tried in the fire,” says the Spirit. Oh, let not your faith be a mere spasm, the mere action of a moment! O that you may have the faith of God’s elect, which is of the operation of God the Holy Spirit! Do you ask, “How is this to be had? How can I be saved?” soul, I have a free gospel to preach to you! A full Christ to empty sinners! A precious Christ for lawless outcasts! A rich Christ to beggarly and starving souls! “Whoever will,” says Jesus, “let him come and take of the water of life freely.” “He who believes on the Son has everlasting life.” He who trusts Christ is a plant of God’s right-hand planting! O that you would trust Jesus now! I know there is something which holds you back, and you say, “I am not fit.” He needs no fitness! Come as you are. Any man is fit to be washed who is black with sin! Any man is fit to be made whole who is sick! Any man is fit to be relieved who is poor. Ah, you have got the fitness in your unfitness, for your unfitness is all the fitness that He needs! “But may I come?” you ask. May you? Yes, if you need the Savior, you may come. Just as you may go to the fountain which stands in the street and sends forth its sparkling streams, that he who is thirsty may drink, so may you come now! “The greater the wretch” said Rowland Hill in his hymn—“the more welcome here!” Christ loves to save big sinners! Filthy sinners, double-dyed sinners, crimson-dyed sinners, Jesus Christ delights to wash!

Oh, is there such a one here tonight? Is there a heart here that longs to have Christ to be his all-in-all? Soul, if you are longing for Christ, He is longing for you! Let the match be

made tonight, since you are both agreed. Since you are agreed to have Christ, and He wills to have you—here, strike hands tonight, and take Him “to have and to hold, for better for worse, for life and for death.” Yes, for all eternity! What do you say? “Oh, I am not worthy.” “Ah,” He says, “you are black with sin, but you are comely in Me; if you are but willing to come to Me now.” Has the Holy Spirit made you willing to come to Christ? In Christ’s name, come! He bids you come. From heaven He speaks to you tonight through His ambassador, “Come and welcome, sinner, come!” The door is opened, and the Master stands outside, and He says, “My oxen and My fatlings are killed. Come to the supper!” Trust Jesus, sinner! Down with you, down with you, flat on your face before Him! Trust Him with your soul just as it is! Away with your “but,” and “ifs,” and with your “tomorrows,” and “perhapses,” and your carnal reasoning! Now, with an empty hand, take a full Christ! Now, with empty, hungry mouths, receive the living food, “For He is able to save unto the uttermost them who come unto God by Him!” One may grow hoarse in calling after poor souls, but they will never come unless our heavenly Father comes after them by His Spirit! But He often does come when the Word is preached with faithfulness and affection, God is in the Word—God wrestling with the souls of men, and going after the souls of men, and fetching in souls, as our Church-books testify every week!

Oh, I am loath to leave off tonight. Let me plead with you another moment! Poor heart! Do you go away and say, “There is nothing for me”? How can this be? How can it be? Even if the text condemns you, still the gospel is preached to you! Christ Jesus says, “Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” There is something for you—you who cannot see the preacher down yonder in the lobbies—there is something for you! In your ears the Word

sounds. “Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters, and he that has no money, come, buy and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” Trust Christ, sinner, and your soul is saved! A plant of the Father’s right-hand planting is that soul who has come to put his trust in Jesus. And the devil himself shall not be able to pluck you up!

424 THE TRUE APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION –
Ps. 45:16

A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Morning, December 15th, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

**“Instead of your fathers shall be your children, whom You
may make princes in all the earth.” — Psalm 45:16**

THE OVERWHELMING national calamity announced to the citizens of London at midnight by the solemn tolling of the great bell of St. Paul’s was unknown to most of us until we entered this sanctuary. It was, therefore, impossible to drape the building with the tokens of our sorrow. Nor can the preacher adapt his discourse to this most melancholy occasion. We have already prayed most earnestly for our beloved Sovereign, the widowed Queen of England—may the God of all consolation cheer her lonely heart with that divine comfort which He alone can give. With reverent sympathy we all mourn in her mourning, and weep in her weeping. We are all bereaved in her bereavement; and we wish that by some means she could really know how intense and how universal is the grief of her loyal and loving subjects who view her in this hour more as their mother than as their Queen. To God again, we commend the Royal Widow and household. O Lord, be You a present help in this their time of need!

Excuse me, brothers and sisters, if I find it imperative to address you from my selected text, and to turn your mind to

subjects of another kind. My text was suggested by certain events which have transpired in our own Church; the Lord having removed from us during the past week a valued elder of the Church; and having, at the same time, given us a singular increase from the families of the Church. I thought the two events together were a notable exposition of this verse, “Instead of your fathers shall be your children, whom you may make princes in all the earth.”

The 45th Psalm is a sort of marriage song, proclaiming the glories of Christ, the husband; and the beauties—the God-given beauties of the Church, His bride. The bride is described as attired in her garments of needlework, and clothing of worked gold, attended by her royal maidens; while the King Himself is portrayed as being doubly fair, “fairer than the children of men,” having grace poured into His lips. According to the Eastern custom, at the marriage ceremony there were many good wishes expressed, and the benediction was also pronounced upon the newly married pair, that they might become as fruitful as Isaac and Rebecca; hence the blessing of children in our text. It was the custom with great kings, when they had many sons, to allot to them different parts of their dominions; the young princes were made *satraps* over certain provinces, hence the blessing pronounced, “Whom you may make princes in all the earth.” A continuous line is promised, and perennial honor is secured. Christ is to be the spiritual parent of many sons—“He shall see His seed”—these sons are to be illustrious, and partake in the kingdom of their divine Lord, for “He shall bring many sons unto glory.”

I shall try this morning, first of all, to expound the text in *its different imports, in different periods of the church's history*; then endeavor *to interpret it by our present experience*; and then, thirdly, *make an inquiry as to how far in our midst we have seen it proved*, that “Instead of your fathers shall be your children.”

I. First of all then, we are to interpret the text in the light of **THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH IN THE PAST**. And we think we can bring out different shades of meaning while interpreting the promise by its fulfillment; for we may rest assured that is the safest way of reading promise and prophecy in the light of actual events.

First, let us take our stand at the end of Old Testament history, just where the New Testament begins. The Church stands with her records in her hands; she turns to the first page, and reads of the protomartyr Abel; in following years she views the glittering names of Noah, of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob; onward to Moses and Aaron; farther on still to the time of her judges, her kings, her prophets, until she sees the roll closed by the failing hand of Malachi. She drops a tear, and she cries, “Alas, the book is closed! The fathers, where are they? The Elijahs have mounted in their fiery chariots to heaven, and the Elishas have gone down to their tombs.” “Not so,” says Christ, her husband, “no, not so, beloved; your roll of children has not ended; the glories of your descendants have not yet come to their close.” “Instead of your fathers shall be your children.” John the Baptist rises up instead of Elijah, and even excels him, for among them who had been born of women there was not a greater than John the Baptist! Then came her husband Himself, even Jesus, who was better than many sons, since He gathered up in His own person all the perfections of those mighty men who had been His types before. But, it seemed as if the Lord would supply in New Testament history, the vacuum which was caused by the departure of Old Testament saints. Have we in the Old Testament a far-seeing Ezekiel, who can read the rolls of the future by the river Chebar? Ah, then we shall have a John, who in the gloomy Isle of Patmos shall behold bright revelations of God! Have we a clear outspoken practical Daniel, who loves truth and righteousness? We shall

have a James, who shall expound the law of faith which works, which proves its truthfulness by holiness! Have we an eloquent Elijah, who pours forth from his lips streams of evangelical doctrine, speaking more of Christ than all the rest? Lo, Paul the apostle, “not a whit behind the very chief of the apostles,” takes his place! Have we in the Old Testament a young Josiah, who purged the temple, and had his heart perfect towards God? So have we in our history, young Timothy, whose heart is right before his God! Have we a bold and dashing Haggai, who in rough strains reproves the people for their sins? So have we a Peter, who, nothing daunted, lays to the charge of an immense multitude the murder of Jesus, the Son of David! No, even in women we have no failure; for if under the Old Testament dispensation, they sang of Sarah, the mother of the faithful, what shall we say of Mary? “Blessed among women shall she be; from henceforth all generations shall call her blessed.” If they had their Rahab, as a trophy of divine grace, we have that woman which was a sinner; and if they had their Deborahs, mothers in Israel, we have Lydia, and Dorcas, and Priscilla, and of honorable women not a few! Stephen is not inferior to Abel, nor is Philip less in honor than Nathan. We say that our New Testament host of heroes is superior to that of the past, and that most manifestly, God did make the children of His Church princes in all the earth, right royally in faith did they divide the nations, and sway the spirits of kingdoms, though in the world’s eye they were like their Master, “despised and rejected of men.” So, it seems to me, we may read this text.

We proceed a little further in history to the time when, after Christ had ascended on high, His disciples went everywhere preaching the Word; and as they went, they sought out, first of all, the lost sheep of the house of Israel; but both providence and grace conspired to compel them to preach the Word to the Gentiles also, that they might be saved. More than this, the Jews,

moved with anger, opposed the truth of God; and on a certain memorable occasion, one of the apostles said to them, “Lo, we turn unto the Gentiles.” A blessed turning for you and for me! Now I think I see the Church weeping again and again. “Alas,” she says, “the fathers have rejected me; the Pharisees in their self-righteousness, the Sadducees in their licentiousness, the Herodians in their worldliness, the mass of the people in their superstition, have despised and rejected the truth of Christ my Lord. Alas,” she says, “that the olive has been despoiled of her branches! What shall I do? The natural branches have been lopped away, till the trunk stands bare and leafless.” Her Master appears to her, and comfortably repeats His assurance, “Instead of your fathers shall be your children, whom you may make princes in all the earth.” “Lo,” says He, “I have given you the heathen for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession.” I think I see her tender and triumphant husband, pointing with joyous finger to the different countries that should afterwards receive the truth, glancing over Alpine ranges to the valleys of Switzerland, and beyond the pillars of Hercules, to these Isles of the Sea in which His name has so long been honored, and then expanding His hands as though He would clasp the whole, saying to her, “They who dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Me; My enemies shall lick the dust; all kings shall bow down before Me; all generations shall call Me blessed. Have I taken Palestine from you? Lo, I have given you all the nations of men that are upon the face of the earth. Shall the Hebrew discard Me? Lo, I have given you ten thousand times ten thousand—as many as the stars of heaven for number, who shall be the spiritual seed of Abraham, who was the father of the faithful.” Verily Christ has fulfilled this promise to His Church, and is fulfilling it at this very day! Ethiopia stretches out her hands in prayer, Europe rejoices in His name, Asia yields her converts, and

America adores His name. We are hoping that the Jew will be ingathered with the fullness of the Gentile; but, meanwhile, the children are taking the place of the fathers, and we who were the children of the desolate, and of the barren woman, are now far more in number than those who were the children of “the married wife.”

I shall beg you to run your eyes through history a little further to the time when the apostles, one by one, yielded up their ministry, and their immediate successors followed them to their tombs. It must have been a day of great lamentation to the Church of Christ, when at last John, the last of the 12 stars, gave forth no more light on earth, but was translated to shine in another firmament—in heaven above! We think we hear the news, as it spreads through all the churches that were scattered about Asia, Bithynia and Cappadocia, Africa, Spain, Italy, Gaul, and perhaps Britain itself—“John is dead!” The last spark of the apostolic fire has died out; the last of the live coals that glowed with the miraculous flame of apostolic fire has been taken with the golden tongs from off the altar of earth, and removed by seraphic wings to blaze upon the golden altar in heaven! Then, there followed grievous martyrdoms, and Polycarp, and Ignatius, and men of that order who had been the companions of the apostles; and some of whom may even have seen our Lord, departed from among the sons of men. The lions’ jaws were busy grinding the bones of the confessors! The dungeons were swollen with the captive martyrs of Christ! The blood of the Church flowed in one perpetual stream of crimson, and the Church might have wept and said “Alas, alas! The chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof! You have barked my fig tree; you have cut down my cedar; you have laid desolate my vineyards, and broken down my hedges. You have taken away the heroes from the battle, and the standard-bearers from the strife. My young men have fallen by the sword, and

their fathers have gone into captivity. What shall the Church do?” She was like Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted because they were not. She said, as she saw her new converts, “Call them Benoni,” even those who were born of her in what she thought to be her expiring pangs she named, “Sons of sorrow.” But her Lord said concerning those who were born unto her, “Call them Benjamin, the sons of My right hand,” for in the place of the fathers who have perished, the children shall rise up. And they did so; and there was a long succession of men as bold to dare, as clear to testify, and as holy to live, as those who had departed to their God! We do not believe in that fiction of apostolic succession by the laying on of hands of men; but we do believe in that glorious truth of apostolic succession—the laying on of the hands of *God*, when He Himself calls out one by one from the midst of mankind—men who shall grasp the standard when the standard-bearer falls—men who shall bear the great two-edged sword, and fight God’s battles when those who fought them before have gone down triumphant to their graves! The Lord supplied the lack of His Church at every hour. To use that sentence which has been worn long, but is never threadbare—the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church; and so, instead of your fathers, your children arise to praise their God!

Further down in history there came the time of the Church’s most awful dearth. She had sinned. Led by the princely hand of Constantine to the altar of infamous adultery, she prostituted herself to a connection with the State, and committed fornication with the kings of the earth. From that day forth the Spirit of God forsook her, and in the brightness of His splendor He shone not upon her. Her vigor died when the imperial hand was laid upon her! Whatever a royal hand may do to diseased men, it always brings the king’s evil upon the Church. No ills of poverty or persecution can equal the

injurious effects of State alliance upon the Church of God! Her freedom is evaporated, her discipline becomes a pretense, her faults cannot be remedied, her progress in reformation is prohibited, her glory is departed. The Christian Church, when linked with the Roman power, soon declined till the truth of God became dim, and holiness was stained; then the much fine gold was changed, then the light of her sun was as the light of eventide, if not as the darkness of midnight itself; and she stood, clouds and darkness being round about her, and sorrow her portion! By the lapse of years the good died, and only the evil lived! The curse of the State had engendered priestcraft, pope-dom—and what if I say hell-dom—in all lands! The Church stood and wept, and she said, “Chrysostom, where is he? His golden mouth is silent. Augustine, where is he? We can no more tell of the gospel of the grace of God; the angelic doctor has departed. Athanasius, where is he?—that rock in the midst of the billows?” And she wept, for she seemed to have no men left; no eye pitied and no arm helped her. But lo, her God spoke and said, “Instead of your fathers shall be your children, whom you may make princes in all the earth.” And three imperial spirits, chief among the sons of men, sprung up—Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli, worthy to stand side-by-side with any fathers that even the Old Testament or apostolic times could produce! They had their bright companions, who stood firmly with them, and shone like a divine constellation in the midst of the dark night of popery! God seemed to say to the Church, “I will give you back apostles, I will give you back your prophets, I will send to you a new host of warriors; there shall be giants in those days, and you shall make them princes in all the earth.”

Then, to come later, and end our historical review; there came a period when the Church had again, a second time, sold herself to the State, when she who should be the Lord's chaste virgin became once more the mistress and harlot of kings. She

wore her bondage readily enough until, happily for her, the princes made her yoke heavy, and her life bitter. Then came a sifting season, when the chaff and the wheat could no more abide together, when the lovers of God and His truth must break their alliance with death and their covenant with hell! There rose up in the midst of the Church, a company of men who would not endure to have the Word of God altered and fashioned by princes—who saw that God’s truth was not to be molded like a nose of wax by committees, or bishops, or judges. They came forth from the mass to join those few who, like the few in Sardis, had not defiled their garments. The Church wept and mourned, for she said, “Wycliffe has departed; the mighty Lollards, those shakers of the nation, have gone their way; the fathers have departed.” But God said to her, “Instead of your fathers shall be your children,” and up rose such men as Bunyan, Charnock, Howe, Goodwin, Owen, Manton, Caryl, and multitudes more of like gigantic mind! That mighty host whose names are two thousand, who left the harlot church, and came out from her impurities, were the children who worthily made up for the apostasy of the fathers! These mighty 2,000 men are heroes, whose names are fit to match with Martin Luther and with Calvin, yes, and I dare to say it, with any of the martyrs who have gone before! They stood alone. And now, it seems to me, at this day, when any say to us, “You, as a denomination, what great names can you mention? What fathers can you speak of?” We may reply, “More than any other under heaven, for we are the old apostolic Church that has never yet bowed to the yoke of princes! We, known among men in all ages by various names, such as Donatists, Novatians, Paulicians, Petrobrussians, Cathari, Arnoldists, Hussites, Waldenses, Lollards, and Anabaptists have always contended for the purity of the Church, and her distinctness and separation from human government! Our fathers were men

accustomed to hardships, and unused to ease. They present to us, their children, an unbroken line which comes legitimately from the apostles, not through the filth of Rome, not by the manipulations of Prelates, but by the divine life, the Spirit's anointing, the fellowship of the Son in suffering, and of the Father in truth."

But where shall I wander? I go upon a needless errand, for what are our fathers to us unless we prove ourselves their worthy sons? Let us forego our pedigree, and see if we have present grace by which to prove the succession of which we boast. Neander has said, "There is a future for you Baptists." Let us not be slow to ensure it! I say, let us instead of doing as many will do during the next year, instead of boasting descent from the 2,000 who came out on Bartholomew's Day, let us pray that we may be able to glory more in our children than in our fathers! Let us say, "No, we will not think of the past to be proud of it, but we will think of the present to labor for it, that we may show to the world that the old life is not extinct, that ours is not a roll of wonders which have all been completed and finished, but it contains the prophecy of wonders yet to come, wherein God shall show forth His mighty acts unto the sons of men." May it be so in all the Churches of Christ! May it be abundantly so in our own Church and denomination, to the honor and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ!

II. We have to interpret our text, secondly, in its **APPLICATION TO OUR OWN CIRCUMSTANCES AT THE PRESENT TIME.** "Instead of your fathers shall be your children."

It seems clear enough from the text, as well as from observation, that *the fathers must be taken from us*. Yes, it is the delight of a pastor to look upon the reverend heads of those who have served the Church, some of them for more than half a century with integrity, with uprightness, and with success; but

they must leave us. The hands of affection cannot retain them among us, however firmly they may make the grasp. Our earnest prayers cannot immortalize them in the land of mortality, and our greatest kindness cannot preserve their bodies from moldering back to their native dust in the land of decay. The fathers *must* go—as we look upon their snow-white heads, often the painful reflection crosses our mind—“We cannot expect to have them with us long; David must sleep with his fathers; Hezekiah, though his life is lengthened for a while, must at last yield to the inexorable decree, for ‘there is no discharge in this war.’”

Now, the loss of the fathers must be to the Church always painful, for we lose *the maturity of their judgment*. When, having passed through many difficulties, they begin to see their way through the ordinary trials of life; when, having tested and proved many things, they have come to hold fast that which is good, and have become meet to be instructors of babes, and guides of those who wander—just then, the eye that sees so clearly is filmed, the hand which could point so plainly is paralyzed, and the foot which so firmly in the way of wisdom totters, and the man falls to his last home. We lose, besides the maturity of their judgment, their blessed *living testimony*, just when they had begun to tell us that for 70 years they had found God’s Word to be faithful and true; just when they could give their *viva voce* testimony to the faithfulness and goodness of an immutable God, their lips are silenced! They bequeath to us the legacy of their living example, and their dying witness, but we have them not alive among us as pillars in the House of our God, and witnesses for the faith. And just, too, when we thought that their *bold efforts* were almost necessary to the Church’s success, it usually happens that then they are taken away. Hushed is the voice which could instruct! Still is the heart that was always anxiously beating with a desire for Zion’s

prosperity! They are gone, and they leave a gap in our defenses; they pull down a tower from our battlements; the shields of the mighty are taken away, and the chariots are burned in the fire! They are removed from us, too, when their prayers were more than usually valuable, when the mellowness of their piety gave a blessed fragrance to their supplications. They are taken from us when their hoary heads added dignity in our eyes to their supplications, and when their righteous lives seemed to prevail with God for the fulfillment of His Word, that the effectual fervent prayer of righteous man should avail much! Yes, as I look around, as a young pastor, upon my brothers in arms, those who have stood by me these eight years in all our conflicts and our struggles, who have been with me in the wilderness of my temptation, by the bed of my sickness; my helpers in council, my assistants in labor, my comforters in trial, my ready friends in the Church, and my protectors in the midst of the rioting crowd—those who for these many years have borne the burden and heat of the day—I cannot refrain from emotions of the deepest grief at the thought that the fathers must not live forever, but that one by one, as the stars set beneath the horizon line, so must they set on earth, to shine in another and better sphere—not lost, thank God, but gone before! We have this week lost one who was, I think, the first person I received into Church fellowship here, he having been for many years a useful member of other Baptist Churches. He served his Master well—as well as continual weakness and increasing feebleness of health would permit him. And now he is gone—who next shall follow, God only knows; but one by one, the young *may* go, but the old *must*. The young are as in a siege, where the bullet may cut them down; but the old are as in the breach, where the attack is being made, and death is storming the ramparts. The fathers must depart! We dwell no longer on that, lest we indulge in dreary apprehensions as to

our Church's future, though that were folly and sin, for in looking back on the past, we have seen such a marvelous succession in the ministry, and also in all the offices of the Church, that we cannot but thank God that He does still walk among the golden candlesticks, and trims the lamps!

But let us turn to the pleasing reflection, "Instead of your fathers shall be your children." When the fathers die, God shall find other men who, trained while their fathers yet lived, shall be ready and ripe to take their places. Very often we hear the question, "If such-and-such a minister should die, who could occupy his pulpit? What would be the use of such-and-such a building, if So-and-So were taken to his rest?" Ah, you know not what you ask, nor what you say—"Instead of the fathers shall be the children." Men of faith are followed by men of faith! They, who trust God, when they die, shall be succeeded by others who shall walk in the same divine life, and shall see the same promises fulfilled! The love which burned in the heart of one, when quenched there by death, shall burn in the breast of another! The hope that gleamed from one's joyous eyes shall soon gleam from the eyes of another whom God has raised up to be his successor! The work shall not stop for lack of a workman; supplication shall not cease for lack of righteous men to pray; the offering of praise shall not be stopped from the absence of grateful hearts to offer joyous songs. God shall be pleased to raise up one after another, according as it is written, "Moses My servant is dead, but behold, Joshua shall go before you." What a blessed thing it is, that in this Church we have seen the promise fulfilled in olden times; and we can look round upon our denomination, and other churches can do the same, and remember families that have been connected with our struggles and our strifes from the very earliest periods of history. If you look down the hand-book of Baptist ministers, you will see there, names which have appeared for these last

three or four centuries! And if you could turn to the church-rolls of some of our different churches, you would see that there are certain family names which constantly recur—not written now and then, but in one direct line, as though the God of Abraham were the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, and the God of all the families, even to the last generation! I pray that such a succession as this may fall upon many families here, and that as you have known the Lord, so your house may never lack a man to stand and to do service in the temple before the Lord God of Israel!

III. But I come to the last point, which is the most important—that is, **TO MAKE AN INQUIRY AS TO THE MATTER OF FACT, HOW FAR THIS TEXT HAS BEEN TRUE IN OUR EXPERIENCE AS A CHURCH.**

We will put this matter in the form of questions. How many are there here today, of the usual worshippers, in our midst whose parents were in Christ, and who are themselves in Christ, too? When I was thinking over this subject in my study, my eyes in vision glanced over the pews, and I thought of the different families. I could remember one or two, perhaps, where there are children arrived at years of maturity who were yet unconverted. But for the most part, I think, there is hardly an exception to the rule in this place—that where there are parents who serve God, there are some children who serve Him also. If it were right, we might glance to the right hand, and to the left, and we might say, “There is a household yonder, where one, two, three, four, five, six, seven fear the Lord. The father and the mother are walking in the faith, and their children going on pilgrimage with them.” We might turn to another family, and say, “There are two who have arrived at years of maturity, who have made a profession of their faith in Christ, and are walking in their parents’ footsteps. And their parents hope that as the others grow up, it will be to call the

Redeemer blessed.” I might look down below, and look with joy, too, upon many families! With some of you God has dealt very graciously, for He has brought all your children in. With others He has begun to do His gracious work; He has brought one or two of your household. And though there are some few solemn and sad exceptions, yet, blessed be God, these are few, very few indeed! Here we have seen that “the promise is to us and to our descendants, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call.” Here we have had the words of Paul and Silas richly and abundantly fulfilled—“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house.”

Besides this, to go a little further, how many are there in this Church who have been raised up by God to fill similar positions in the Church to those which their forefathers had? I hope there will always be a succession unto God in the eldership and in the deaconship; and what if I would be egotistical enough to say so, in the ministry, too? I would to God there might be in every single position in this Church, as soon as one dies, another, allied and descended from the departed to take his place! That, too, has been fulfilled in several instances in our midst. In the Church of God at large it is really surprising to see how constantly the mantle of Elijah falls upon Elisha! If you read through the list of our ministers, you will see certain names like Angus, Pearce, and Fuller which run right on. Some of us can look back to four or five generations in which our parents have always been preachers of the Word. It is the happiness of one here present to know, that while he himself and his beloved brother preach the Word, his father and his grandfather, too, are uttering the same gospel that is preached here today! And so has it been with many a household. We are not solitary instances. There are very many such, where there has been a succession, a positive succession—not grace running *in* the blood, but grace running

side-by-side with the blood, so that instead of the fathers, the children have been raised up who have been illustrious in the Church, and distinguished in the world, as kings and priests unto our God!

We have asked two questions, and some of us have had great pleasure in answering them; but a pang has rent the heart of some others. We must enlarge upon that, not to increase the pang, but that God may graciously remove it. Are there not sons and daughters here, descended from holy men and women, who today are careless? Your mother's God is *not* your God! She dropped her holy tears upon your infant forehead, and devoted you from the very breast to God. She prayed for you. She is now a saint of God in heaven, and you are on your way to being an heir of wrath in hell! Perhaps you are remembering now, some hymn which was a favorite with her, which you saw this very morning in the hymn-book; and the Psalm that was read, you remember its solemn reading at her grave, and you have remembered *her*, but you have not remembered her God! She is not the mother of saints, in your case, but the mother of a careless soul who knows the truth and cares not for it, who hears the invitation of the gospel, and wantonly and wickedly rejects it. Young men and women! Would you bring down your parents' gray hairs with sorrow to the grave? You can do it speedily by open iniquities; you can do it gradually by a silent careless rejection of Christ Jesus. Some of you have yourselves grown old, your parents are to you traditions of the past, they have long since moldered in the grave; but you are still ungodly. You took not up the standard when your father's arm failed to hold it—not you! You stood not in the ranks of God's mighties when your parent fell—not you! You are today only a *hearer*, and not a *doer* of the Word—listening to the outward sound, but not receiving the inward sense. O soul! What will you do when you shall leave your body,

and stand before your God? What will you do when, looking upward from the awful gulf, you see your mother, your father, glorified? Oh, there will be weeping, there will be weeping at the judgment seat of Christ! There will be sorrow beyond all sorrow in that valley of decision, when the multitude shall be gathered together, to be torn in two forever! Oh, it will be doleful, it will be doleful, when we part to meet no more! No more the kiss of affection, or even the tie of relationship. Shut up in heaven shall you be, you beatified spirits. Shut up in hell shall *you* be, you impenitent, if you come to the judgment seat of God. This is the more sorrowful because it relates to some of you—you who are here this morning—some of you who are always sitting in these seats! You come as God's people come, and hear as they hear, but are not blessed as they are!

Lastly, it may be I speak to some who have strayed in here this morning accidentally, who are even worse than this. And so, man, you have lived to curse your God! What was that oath this morning before you left your house—an oath in which your mother's Savior was blasphemed? And you have grown up, and you ill-use your wife for desiring to worship your father's God! You were baptized of old in your father's prayers, and immersed in your mother's affectionate yearnings. When she brought you forth, and first looked upon your infant form, she blessed God that she was the mother of a man-child, in the hope that he might be devoted unto God from his youth up. Alas, poor mother! It would be better for him that he had never been born! When your father heard the tidings of your birth, he said, "Let him serve his God, and my heart is glad." He had no thoughts of begetting you to be a fiend in hell, or a slave of the devil! And yet, stranger, would it be too hard to say that is what you are this morning? "No," you say, "not *quite* a blasphemer." Well, an infidel. And what is an infidel but a blasphemer who has not courage to say what he thinks in his

heart? And so you doubt the Deity of that precious Savior on whom your mother's soul reposed? And so you despise that religion which was her comfort in her last expiring hour? And so, I say, you are an enemy to that God in whose eternal bosom your own sire rests forever! Well, shall it always be so? Angel of destiny! Shall it always be so? Shall the wax of human life cool, and shall the doom be sealed forever? No, angel of mercy! Intervene, and now, oh, NOW reverse the man's condition! Turn his heart to flesh! Melt the adamant in the precious blood of Jesus, and make it soft! "There is forgiveness with Him that He may be feared." Come unto Him! Come unto Him! He will receive you still! "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the Lord." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." May the Spirit of God find you this morning! May He prick you in the heart! May He make you feel and tremble!— more than that—may He make you fly to Christ, the City of our Refuge! May He compel you to put your trust in the atonement which He made for many! May you now find in Him a Savior, "able to save unto the uttermost those who come unto God through Him!" Let every parent say, "Amen!"

425 TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE! – A PARADOX

– LUKE 24:41

A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Evening, December 15th, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“They yet believed not for joy.” — Luke 24:41

THIS IS a very strange sentence, but the Christian is a singularly complex being. He is a compound of the fallen, and of the perfect. He continually detects in himself an alternation between the almost diabolical, and the divine. Man himself is a contradiction, but the Christian is that contradiction made more paradoxical! He cannot comprehend himself, and only those who are like he can understand him. When he would do good, he finds evil present with him. How to will he often finds, but how to perform he finds not. He is the greatest riddle in the universe! He can say with Ralph Erskine—

“I’m in my own and others’ eyes,
A labyrinth of mysteries.”

In the case before us, the disciples saw Christ manifestly before their eyes. To a certain extent they believed in His resurrection; that belief gave them joy, and at once that very joy made them unbelieving! They looked again; they believed once more; soon, a wave of joy rolled right over the head of their

faith, and then afresh their doubts returned! What palpitations, what heaving of the heart they had! “It is too good to be true,” they said. This is the summing up of the mental process which was going on within— “It is true; how blessed it is; it cannot be true because it is so blessed.” Tonight, I shall endeavor to address that timid but hopeful tribe of persons who have heard of the greatness and preciousness of the salvation of Christ, and have so far believed, that they have been filled with happiness on account of it, but that very enjoyment has made them doubt, and they have exclaimed—“It cannot be; it is not possible; this exceeds all my expectations; it is, in fact, too good to be true!” I remember to have been myself the subject of this temptation. Overjoyed to possess the treasure which I had found hidden in the field, delighted beyond all measure with the hope that I had an interest in Christ, I feared that the gold might be counterfeit, the pearl a cheat, my hope a delusion, my confidence a dream! Newly delivered from the thick darkness, the overwhelming brightness of divine grace threatened to blind my eyes! Laden with the new favors of a young spiritual life, the excessive weight of the mercy staggered my early strength, and I was for some time troubled with the thought that these things must be too great a good to be true. If God had been half as merciful, or a tithe as kind as He was, I could have believed it, but such exceeding riches of His grace were too much; such out-doings of Himself in goodness, such giving exceeding abundantly above what one could ask or even think, seemed too much to believe!

We will at once attempt to deal with this temptation. First of all, *I will try to account for it*; then secondly, *to recount the reasons which forbid us to long indulge it*; and then, thirdly, *turn the very temptation itself into a reason why we should be more earnest in seeking these good things*.

I. To begin, LET ME ACCOUNT FOR IT.

It is little marvel that the spirit is amazed even to astonishment and doubt *when you think of the greatness of the things themselves*. The man black with sin says—“My iniquity is great; I deserve the wrath of God; the gospel presents me with a pardon, full and complete. I have labored to wash out these stains, but they will not disappear; the gospel tells me that the precious blood of Jesus cleanses from all sin. Year after year have I revolted and gone astray; the gospel tells me that He is able to forgive all my sins, and to cast my iniquities behind His back.” Bowed down with a sense of the greatness of his guilt, you may excuse the sinner if he thinks it is impossible that the offenses he has committed could ever be condoned, or his iniquity could be put away. “No,” he says, “I am a condemned sinner, and the promise of a free pardon is too much for me to believe—

Depths of mercy can there be,
Pardon yet reserved for me?”

“No, more,” says the poor soul, “I am told that God is prepared to *justify* me; to give me a perfect righteousness; to look upon me as though I had always been a faithful servant; to regard me to all intents and purposes as though I had kept all His laws without any offense, and had obeyed all His statutes without any exception! According to the Scriptures, I am to be robed about with the finished *righteousness* of Christ, clothed in that garment which He spent His life to work, and I am in that garment to stand *accepted* in the beloved! It is too good to be true,” says the soul; “it cannot be. *I*, the condemned one, accepted? *I*, who never kept God’s law, received as though I had kept it wholly? *I*, who have broken it, pressed to His bosom as though I were perfect in innocence?” It does startle the soul, and well it may! And when the gospel goes on to add—“Yes,

and not only will I *justify* you, but I will *adopt* you; you shall be no more a servant, but a *son*, no more a bond-slave but an *heir* of God and a joint-heir with Christ”—the mind cannot grasp the whole of that thought! “Adopted, received into His family? Alas,” it cries, “I am not worthy to be called God’s son.”

And as the sinner looks upon its former abject and lost estate, and looks upward to the brightness of the inheritance which adoption secures to it, it says—“It is impossible,” and like Sarah, he laughs saying, “How can this be? How can it be possible that I should attain to these things?” And then, the gospel adds—“Soul, I will not only adopt you, but having sanctified you entirely—your whole spirit, soul, and body—I will crown you; I will bring you to the mansions of the blessed in the land of the happy; I will put a new song into your mouth, and the palm of victory in your hand; you shall play the harp of triumph; your soul will be deluged with delight, and your spirit shall bathe itself in everlasting and unbroken peace! heaven is yours, though you deserve hell; God’s glory yours, though you deserve His wrath.” It is little marvel that these things, being so excessively great, the poor broken heart should be like the captives who returned from Babylon, who were “like men who dream”—

“When God restored our captive state,
Joy was our song, and grace our theme;
The grace beyond our hopes so great,
That joy appeared a painted dream!”

Another reason for incredulity may be found in our sense of unworthiness. *Note the person who receives these mercies*, and you will not wonder that he believes not for joy. “Ah,” he says, “if these things were given to the righteous I could believe it, but to me, an old offender; to me, a hard-hearted despiser of the

overflowing love of God; to me who has looked on the slaughtered body of the Savior without a tear, and viewed the precious blood of redemption without delight; to me, who has blasphemed, who has done despite to the Spirit of His grace, and trod underfoot His truth—oh,” says this poor heart, “I could believe it for anyone; I could believe it for the whole world sooner than for myself!” For you must know that the repenting sinner always has a deeper view of his own sin than of the sin of others, and in this he differs from the impenitent, who have very keen eyes to see offenses in other men, but are blind to their own. He verily esteems himself the chief of sinners! He thinks that if anyone could have had the hottest place in hell that must surely have been *his* proper portion, and it is so amazing to him that *he* should be saved, that his spirit laughs with a kind of incredulity. “What? *I*, the man who sat in the bar and could sing a lascivious song, shall I sit at the right hand of God, and be glorified with Christ? What? *I*, whose heart blasphemed its Creator—whose soul has been a very den of thieves—can *I* be accepted, washed, and saved?” brothers and sisters, when any of us look back upon our past lives, we can find enough ground for astonishment if God has been pleased to choose us; therefore, I say, it is not a strange or a singular thing that the poor heart, from very excess of joy, should be unable to believe.

Add to these *the strange terms upon which God presents these things to poor sinners*. The miracle of the manner equals the marvel of the matter. God comes to the sinner, and He says not to him, “Do penance; pass through years of weariness; renounce every pleasure; become a monk; live in the woods; make yourself a hermit; torture your body; cut yourself with knives; starve yourself; cover yourself with a shirt of hair, or wear a belt of chain about your loins.” No, if He did, it would not appear as amazing! But He comes to the sinner and He says, “Sinner,

believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” No *works* are asked of you; He demands no ceremonies, but simply trust your soul with Christ! Oh, simple words! Oh, easy terms! They are not terms at all, for these He *gives* us—*His Spirit enables us to trust in Jesus*. If He had demanded us do some great thing, we would have been very willing to attempt it, but when it is simply, “Wash and be clean”—“Oh,” we say, “that simple thing, that easy plan? That scheme which is as well-fitted to the beggar as to the king? As suitable to the poor abandoned prostitute as to the most moral of the Pharisees? That scheme which adapts itself to the ignorant, and the rude, as well as to the learned and polite?” Our spirit says, “Ah, ‘tis a joyous plan,” and yet, from very joy, it is unable to believe!

And add to this one more thought—the *method by which God proposes to work all this*; that is to say, He proposes to pardon, and to justify the sinner instantaneously. The plan of salvation requires not months nor weeks in which his sin may be put away. It is finished. An instant is enough to receive it, and in that instant the man is saved! The moment a man believes in Christ, not *some* of his sins, but *all* his sins are forgiven! Just as when God blew with His wind, the Egyptians were all drowned at once in the waters of the Red Sea, and Moses said, “You shall see them no more forever,” so, when once we believe in Christ, the breath of God’s pardoning love blows upon the waters, and our sins sink into the bottom like a stone; there is not *one*, not *one* of them left! It is as when a man takes a bond, you are his debtor; he can imprison you, but he holds the bond over the candle flame, and he says, “See here!” And when it is burned, your whole debt, though it was 10 or 20,000 pounds, is gone in a moment! So does faith; it sees the handwriting of the ordinances that were against us taken away and nailed to Christ’s cross. Now, this does seem a surprising thing; it is so surprising that when men have heard it for the first time, they

have been willing to run anywhere to listen to it again! This was the secret of Whitefield's popularity. The gospel was a *new thing* in his age to the mass of the people! They were like blind men who, having had their eyes opened, and being suddenly taken out at night to view the stars, could not refrain from clapping their hands for joy! The first sight of land is always blessed to the sailor's eyes; and the men of those days felt that they saw heaven in the distance and the port of peace. It is no wonder that they rejoiced even to tears. It was glad tidings to their spirits, and there were some then, as there are now, who could not believe by reason of their excessive joy.

Possibly John Bunyan alludes to this singular unbelief in his sweet picture of mercy's dream wherein, like Sarai, she laughed. Let me tell it to you in his words—"In the morning, when they were awake, Christiana said to mercy, 'What was the matter that you did laugh in your sleep tonight? I suppose you were in a dream.' MERCY: So I was, and a sweet dream it was; but are you sure I laughed? CHRISTIANA: Yes you laughed heartily; but please, mercy, tell me your dream. MERCY: I was dreaming that I sat all alone in a solitary place, and was bemoaning of the hardness of my heart. Now, I had not sat there long, but I thought many were gathered about me to see me, and to hear what it was that I said. So they listened, and I went on bemoaning the hardness of my heart. At this, some of them laughed at me, some called me fool, and some began to thrust me about. With that, I thought I looked up, and saw one coming with wings towards me. So he came directly to me and said, 'Mercy, what ails you?' Now, when he had heard me make my complaint, he said, 'Peace be to you! He also wiped mine eyes with his handkerchief, and clad me in silver and gold. He put a chain about my neck, and earrings in my ears, and a beautiful crown upon my head. Then, he took me by the hand and said, 'Mercy, come after me!' So he went up, and I followed

till we came to a golden gate. Then he knocked; and when they within had opened, the man went in, and I followed him up to a throne, upon which one sat, and He said to me, 'Welcome, Daughter!' The place looked bright and twinkling, like the stars, or rather like the sun; and I thought that I saw your husband there; so I awoke from my dream. But did I laugh?" Well might her mouth be filled with laughter to see herself so favored!

II. Having thus tried to account for this state of the heart, may I have the help of God while I try to **DO BATTLE WITH THE EVIL THAT IS IN IT, THAT WE MAY BE ABLE TO BELIEVE IN CHRIST!**

Troubled heart let me remind you, first of all, that you have no need to doubt the truth of the precious revelation because of its greatness, *for He is a great God who makes it to you*. Did you expect that He, the King of heaven, rich in mercy and abundant in long-suffering, would send little grace, little love, and little pity to the sons of men? What says the Scripture of Araunah the Jebusite?—"All these things did Araunah, as a king, give unto the king." But what shall we say of God? Shall He give like a king? Yes, He is King of kings, and He gives as kings can never give! When Alexander bade his officer demand what reward he pleased, he asked so much that he nearly emptied the treasury, and when the treasurer refused to pay it, and came to Alexander and said, "This man is unreasonable; he asks too much."—"No," said the conqueror, "he asks of Alexander, and he measures what he asks by my dignity." So be it your remembrance that God will not give meanly and stingily, for that were unworthy of Him, but He will give splendidly and magnificently, for this is after His own nature! Expect, therefore, that He will save great sinners in a great and glorious way, and give them great mercies, for the Lord is a great God and a great King above all gods! The riches of His grace are inexhaustible. He is the Father of mercies, and He begets

mercies by thousands and by millions to supply His people's needs. You meet a poor man, and you are hungry. If he were hospitable, he might say, "Come in, sir, and you may have a part of my crust." You go in and you find a scanty meal upon the table, and you say, "What you have given me is all you had to give, I thank you for it." But what would you think if you waited at the royal door and received a royal invitation, and, when you went in, were fed with dry crusts and drops of water? You would think this not becoming a king. Now, if your friend has been offended, and he is willing to forgive, you are grateful to him, for he does perhaps his best, but God stands at His gate with His tables laden with a rich hospitality. "My oxen and My fatlings are killed, all things are ready, come to the supper." Let no low thought of God come in to make you doubt His power to save you! Have *high* thoughts of God and this snare of the fowler will be broken.

Again, let me remind you *that the greatness of God's mercy should encourage you to believe that it comes from God*. If I should take you suddenly, blindfold you, and carry you away, you knew not where, and then, loosening the bandage from your eyes, should say, "Look here; it is all gold on every side, thick slabs of gold and there is a pick-axe; take it and use it"—you begin and turn up blocks of ore— would you have any idea at the time that this was put there by men? "No," you say, "this is God's mine, the infinite bounty of the Creator; not the scanty contrivance of the creature." The abundance of the treasure proves to you that it cannot be the treasure house of man. Now, you open your eyes in this building tonight, and you see a gas light. "Well," you say, "it is very good—a very good light in its way, but I can see it is man's light." Go out and see the moon's light—did you ever think that man made that? Or wait till tomorrow morning and look up at the sun; wait till noonday, when he is shedding down his brightness and gilding the fields with tints of glory,

and I think you will say, “Ah, I shall never mistake this for man’s work; it is so exceedingly bright that nothing that man can ever achieve in the way of illumination can be at all comparable to it.” Thus, the greatness of the light makes you believe in the divinity that ordained it. If you should see tomorrow a heavy shower of rain, you would not believe, I suppose, that it was made with a watering-pot; and if you saw the Thames swollen to its banks from a great flood, you would not believe that the London waterworks had filled it to its brim! “No,” you say, “this is God at work in nature. The greatness of the work proves that God is here.” If you were ever in Cambridge, you might have seen a little mountain which is so small that nobody knows who made it. Some say it is artificial; some say it is natural. Now, I have never heard any dispute about the Alps—nobody ever said that they were artificial! I never heard of any disputes about the Himalayas; no one ever conjectured that human hands piled them up to the skies and clothed them with their hoary snows. So when I read of the mercies of God in Christ, reaching up like mountains to heaven, I am sure they must be divine. I am certain the revelation must come from God; it must be true; it is self-evident. I might enlarge this argument by showing that God’s works in creation are very great, and therefore, it were idle to think that there would be no great works in grace. Two works which have been made by the same artist always have some characteristics which enable you to see that the same artist made them. In like manner, to us there is one God; creation and redemption have but one author; the same eternal power and Godhead are legibly inscribed on both. Now, when I look at the sea, and hear it roaring in the fullness thereof, I see a great artist there. And when my soul assays the ocean of grace, and listens to the echoes of its motion as the sound of many waters, I see the same Almighty artist! When I see a great sinner saved, then I

think I see the same Master-hand which first formed man, and curiously worked his substance, endowing him with powers so great that they baffle our understanding! But if I only met with little specimens of grace, with narrow gifts and stumped benedictions, I might say—“These may be of man, for man can do many things, and possibly as he has done little things in creation, he can do little things in grace.” But when we meet with astounding conversions, with marvelous forgiveness, we are sure this must be God because it is so great, and so far beyond all human comprehension.

Let me remind you again, that you may get another argument to put an end to your fears about the greatness of God’s mercy *from the greatness of His providence*. Did you ever think how much food God gives to His creatures every year? How much fine wheat He lays upon the earth that we may feed thereon! Have you remembered the vast machinery with which He feeds the thousand millions of men who are upon the face of the globe? When Xerxes led his millions from Persia to Greece, there was a very great and cumbrous system to carry on the commissary so that all the host might be fed; and even as it were, many of them were starved; but here are millions upon millions and God feeds them. No, enlarge the thought! There are the fowls of heaven that are countless—did you ever pick up a dead sparrow that had been starved to death? I never did. Think of the sharp winters, and the birds, somehow or other, without barn or granary, find their food. Look at the millions and millions of fish in the sea, swimming tonight and searching for their food, and your heavenly Father feeds all of them! Look at the innumerable insects creeping upon the earth, or dancing in the summer sunbeam, all supplied. Look at the behemoth who makes the deep to be hoary with roaring, look at huge leviathan, the elephant, the crocodile, and those other mighty creatures of God’s strength to go through the deep or

through the forests; these He supplies in providence. And if He is so lavish here, do you think that in the *masterpiece* of His hands, His grace, He is stinted and narrowed? God forbid! It would be hard to believe in littleness of special love when we see greatness of common Goodness towards the sons of man!

“Oh,” says one, “but I am thinking of my unworthiness, and that this does not meet it.” Well, this will meet it. There is a country where there has been a drought, and the land is all parched and chapped. That field of corn there belongs to a good man; that field over yonder belongs to an infidel; that one over there belongs to a blasphemer; that one is cultivated by a drunk; that other one belongs to a man who lives in every known vice. Here comes a cloud! Blessed be God, here comes a cloud, which sails along through the sky. Where will it go? It is big with rain. It will make the poor dried-up germ revive; there will yet be a harvest; which way will it go? “Of course,” you say, “it will only go in the corner where the godly man has his field.” No, not so! It spreads its rich mantle over the entire sky, and the shower of mercy falls upon the just and the unjust, upon the thankful and upon the unthankful. It falls just as plenteously where the blasphemer is the possessor as where the gracious man lifts up his heart in prayer. Now, what does this show us? God blesses ungodly men, unthankful men, and I hold that as grace is always in analogy with nature. God is ready tonight to bless blasphemers, graceless men, careless men, drunken men, men who ask not His favor, but who, nevertheless, if God wills to save them, shall certainly receive His salvation, who shall have His mercy brought into their souls, and they shall live! To turn the point a moment, and argue again, “Soul,” you say, “I cannot believe, because the mercy is so great.” Would anything but great mercy suit your case at all? Say, would little gains serve your case? Must you not say with Baxter, “Lord, give me great mercy or no mercy, for

nothing short of great mercy can answer my desire?” You need a great Christ; you need one who can wash away foul offenses. He is just such a one as you need! Trust Him! Trust Him! Trust Him now! Besides, what have you to do with asking questions at all? What God gives you to do, is it not yours to do? He tells you, “Trust My Son and I will save you through His blood.” Sinner, ask no questions! Be it right or wrong, the responsibility will not rest with you if you will do as God bids you do! If the Spirit of God should now compel you to trust Christ, lest you perish, then you can say, “I perished doing as God bade me.” That can never be! You will be the first who perished so! May God enable you at this very moment to take Him at His word, and to trust your soul in Jesus’ hands!

III. I close by USING YOUR VERY FEARS AS AN ENTICEMENT TO BELIEVE.

If it is so joyous only to *think* of these things, what must it be to *possess* them? If it gives such a weight to your spirit only to think of being pardoned, adopted, accepted, and saved, what must it be to really be washed? You cannot make a guess. But this I can tell you, the first moment I believed in Christ, I had more real happiness in one tick of the clock than in all the years before! Oh, to be forgiven! It is enough to make a man leap! Yes, to leap three times as John Bunyan puts it, and go on his way rejoicing. Forgiven! Why, a rack becomes a bed of down, the flames become our friends when we are forgiven. Justified! No more condemnation! Oh, the joy of that! The happiness of the slave when he lands on freedom’s shore is *nothing* compared with the delight of the believer when he gets out of the land of the enemy. We speak of the joy of the poor captive who has been chained to the oar by the oppressor, and who at last is delivered—the breaking of his chain is not one-half such melodious music to him as the breaking of our chains to us! “He took me out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay,

and set my feet upon a rock, and put a new song into my mouth, and established my goings”—

“I will praise You every day,
Now Your anger's passed away;
Comfortable thoughts arise
From the bleeding sacrifice.
Jesus is become at length
My salvation, and my strength;
And His praises shall prolong,
While I live, my pleasant song.”

Talk not of the joys of the dance, or of the flush of wine; speak not of the mirth of the merry, or of the flashes of the ambitious and successful. There is mirth more deep than these; a joy more intense; bliss more enduring than anything the world can give. It is the bliss of being forgiven; the bliss of having God's favor and God's love in one's soul; the bliss of feeling that God is our Father; that Christ is married to our souls; and that the Holy Spirit dwells in us, and will abide with us forever. Let the sweetness of the mercy draw you, poor soul! Let the sweetness of the mercy, I say, entice you! But you say, “May I have it?” Come and welcome, come and welcome, sinner, come!

When you get outside of this place, you will see opposite to the Elephant and Castle, a fountain. If you are thirsty, go and drink; there is nobody there to say, “You must not come; you are not fit.” It is put there on purpose for the thirsty. And if tonight you need Christ, if you feel in your souls a desire to be partakers of His salvation, He stands there in the highway of the gospel, and He is free to every thirsty soul. No need to bring your silver cups or your golden vases; you may come with your poverty. No need, my poor friend, that you should wait until you have learned to read well, or have studied the Classics; you

may come in your ignorance just as you are. No need, my poor erring brother, that you should wait till you should thoroughly reform; you may come and do your reformation afterwards. Come to Jesus as you are, just as you are! He will wash the filthy, clothe the naked, heal the sick, give sight to the blind, enrich the penniless, and raise to glory those who seem to be sinking down to hell! Oh, may God draw some tonight, some who have come in here out of curiosity to hear the strange preacher, who only hopes to be strange in seeking to win souls by telling them earnestly God's simple truth! May the Master lay hold of some tonight, yes, tonight! Had I the power to plead as Paul did, could I utter impassioned words like those of the seraphic Whitefield, O could I plead with you as a man pleads for his life, as a mother pleads for her child, so would I say to you, and beseech you that you be reconciled to God! My strength fails, the truth has been uttered. Hear it! May you receive it! "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved"—thus spoke our Lord and Master—"He who believes not shall be damned." Believe and make profession of your faith, for whoever with his heart believes, and with his mouth makes confession, shall be saved!

May the Lord bless the joy of the tidings to the rejoicing of our heart, for His dear name's sake. Amen.

426 THE ROYAL DEATHBED SERMON – AMOS 3:6

A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Evening, December 22nd, 1861,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord has not done it?” —
Amos 3:6

WE HAVE NOTHING to do, this morning, with the question of *moral* evil, and indeed, with the awful mystery of the *origin* of moral evil, we have nothing to do at any time! There may have been some few speculators upon this matter, who like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, could walk in the midst of the fire unharmed, but most men who have ventured near the mouth of this fiery question, have been like Nebuchadnezzar’s guards—they have fallen down, destroyed by the blasting influence of its heat! The problem we have to solve is not how was evil born, but how shall evil die—not how it came into the world, but the mischief it has worked since its coming, and how it is to be driven out. Those persons who fritter away their time in useless and curious inquiries about the origin of moral evil, and so forth, are generally persons who are too idle to attempt the practical casting out of the fiend, and therefore, would kill their time, and quiet their consciences by profound controversies and vain jangling about subjects with which we have nothing to do.

The evil in the text is that of *calamity*, and we might so read the verse—“Shall there be a *calamity* in the city, and the Lord has not done it?”—a question exceedingly appropriate at the present time. There *has* been evil in this city; a calamity of an unusual and disastrous nature has fallen upon this nation. We have lost one who will find today a thousand tongues to eulogize him; a prince whose praise is in the mouth of all; and who is in such repute among you, that it is utterly needless for me to commend his memory to your hearts. We have lost a man whom it was our habit to suspect as long as he lived; he could do little without arousing our mistrusts; we were always alarmed by phantoms of intrusion, and unconstitutional influence, and now that he has departed, we may sincerely regret that we could not trust where confidence was so well deserved. Not of lack of homage to his rank, his talents, or his house, could he complain; but from his tomb there might well come the still small voice of memory, reminding us of many careless suspicions, a few harsh judgments, and one or two heartless slanders. I was pleased by a remark made by the leading journal of the age, to the effect that the Prince Consort’s removal might suggest deep regrets for our thrifty homage and measured respect. He has deserved nothing but good at our hands. Standing in the most perilous position, his foot has not slipped; standing where the slightest interference might have brought down a storm of animosity upon his head, he has prudently withheld himself, and let public affairs as much as possible alone. Looking upon the nature of our government, and the position of the throne in our constitution, I can but say, “Verily it is a heavy calamity to lose such a husband for such a Queen.” So dire is this evil, that our troubled hearts are shadowed with dark forebodings of other ills, of which this may be the mournful herald. We were saying with David, “My mountain stands firm, it shall never be

moved”—an earthquake has commenced, the mountain trembles, one great rock has fallen—what may come next? We *did* reckon upon war, but we had no forewarnings of a Royal funeral; we looked forward with some apprehension to strifes abroad, but not to losses at home. And now, we feel that a cornerstone in the Royal house has been taken away, and we look forward with sorrow and fear to what may come next, and next, and next.

We have great faith in our Constitution, but had we not even greater faith in God, we might fear lest the removal of an eminent minister, lest the taking away of some great men who have stood prominent in our commonwealth, should leave us desolate, without earthly helpers. It is not the fall of yonder stately column, which alone has caused us sadness; it is the prophetic finger pointing to other parts of the goodly pile, which has made us full of forebodings, of the time when, many a noble pillar must lie in the dust. Nor is this all, or the deepest sorrow. We feel this to be an evil upon the city, because of the taking away of a parent from his children, and such children, too—princes, princes whom no man may venture to instruct as could a father, princes into whose ears wise counsels will scarcely enter, save through a father's voice, princes and princesses who needed to have his prudent counsel to steer them through the various trials of their minority, and to cheer them when they should come into the battles of life. He is taken away, who in concert with the Queen, has so well trained them, and what his loss may be to their future characters, only time shall reveal. More than this—and here we touch the most tender string and come nearest to the heart of the evil—Her Majesty has lost her beloved husband, her only equal friend, her only confidant, her only counselor in her private cares. Except for her children, she has lost all at a blow, and she is this day more widowed than the poorest widow in the land!

The bereaved wife of the peasant is too often afflicted by the grasp of chill penury, but she has some equals and friends who prevent the colder hand of regal isolation from freezing the very soul. In our tenderly beloved Sovereign we see Majesty in misery, and what if I say we behold the empress of sorrow? Just as the mountain peaks, the first to catch the sunbeams of summer, are the most terribly exposed to the pitiless blasts of winter, so the elevation of sovereignty with all its advantages in prosperity, involves the maximum of sorrow in the hour of tribulation. What rational man among us would be willing to assume imperial cares in ordinary times, but what must they be now, when household bereavement wrings the heart, and there is no more an affectionate husband to bear his portion of the burden?

Brothers and sisters, we can only sympathize, but we cannot console. Ordinary cases are often within reach of compassion, but the proper reverence due to the highest authority in the land, renders it impossible for the dearest friend to use that familiarity which is the very life of comfort. This is a calamity indeed! O Lord, the Comforter of all those, whose hearts are bowed down, sustain and console our weeping monarch! Would that Robert Hall, or Chalmers, could arise from the grave, to depict this sorrow! As for me, my lips are so unaccustomed to courtly phrases, and I understand so little of those depths of sorrow, that I am not tutored and prepared, to speak on such a subject as this. I do but stammer and blunder, where there is room for golden utterance and eloquent discourse. God of heaven, You know that there beats nowhere a heart that feels more tenderly than ours, or an eye that can weep more sincerely for the sorrow of that Royal Lady, who is thus left alone. Alas, for the Prince who has fallen upon the high places! From the council chamber he is removed; from the abode of all the graces he is taken away; from the home of

loveliness, from the throne of honor, he is gone; and it is an evil—such an evil as has never befallen this nation in the lifetime of any one of us—such an evil, that there is but one death—and may that be far removed—which could cause greater sorrow in the land!

But now, our text lifts up its voice, and demands to be heard, since it is a question from the lips of the Eternal God. “Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord has not done it?”

There are two things upon which we will speak this morning. First, *God has done it*; secondly, *God has done it with a design*. Let us endeavor to find, if we can, what that design is.

I. First then, there is an evil in the city; but **GOD HAS DONE IT**.

There was considerable curiosity to inquire into the *second* cause of this evil. From where did the fever come? We could not suppose it to be bred, as the fever frequently is, in our courts and alleys—in the plague-nest where filth provided it with all its food, until it was hatched to pestilence. What were its earliest symptoms, what its growth, and how was it, that it baffled the physician's skill? We may lay aside these inquiries, to look apart and away from the second cause, to the first great cause who has done all. “The Lord has done it.” He gave the breath, and He has taken it away; He molded the manly form, and He has laid it prostrate in the dust; He has sent the man, and He has said, “Return to the dust from where you were taken!” I call to remembrance the notions which have spread throughout this world, and which are still living in our age—the notions which seek to banish God, and make Him a stranger in the midst of His own works! God must have done this thing, or else we are driven to some other alternative. How came this calamity about? Shall we suppose it to be by chance? There are still some found foolish enough to believe that events happen without divine predestination, and that different

calamities transpire without the overruling hand, or the direct agency of God. Alas, for you and for me, if chance had done it. Ah, what were we, brothers and sisters, if we were left to chance! We would be like poor mariners, put out to sea in an unsafe vessel, without a chart and without a helm; we would know nothing of the port to which we might ultimately come; we would only feel that we were now the sport of the winds, the captives of the tempest, and might soon be the victims of the all-devouring deep! Alas, poor orphans were we all, if we were left to chance. No father's care to watch over us, but left to the fickleness and fallibility of mortal things! What were all that we see about us, but a great sandstorm in the midst of a desert, blinding our eyes, preventing us from ever hoping to see the end through the darkness of the beginning? We would be travelers in a pathless waste, where there were no roads to direct us—travelers who might be overturned and overwhelmed at any moment, and our bleached bones left the victims of the tempest, unknown, or forgotten of all. Thank God it is not so with us. Chance exists only in the heart of fools! We believe that everything which happens to us is ordered by the wise and tender will of Him who is our Father and our Friend; we see order in the midst of confusion; we see purposes accomplished where others discern fruitless wastes; we believe that, "He has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet."

Some, on the other hand, run to another extreme, still forgetting their God. They deny the thought of chance, but they bend to the idea of fate. Some predestinarians without a God are as far astray in their ideas, as those who believe in chance without a God! For what is the "fate" of some men? It reminds me of one of those huge machines employed in the lead mines, where two wheels are always revolving, and breaking the stones quarried from the pit. The stones at first lie

at a distance, but they are continually moving nearer and nearer to the all-devouring mouth of the great wheels, and at last they are crushed and ground. Such is fate in the minds of some men. Or to use another figure—it is like the great car of Juggernaut, dragged along by irresistible power. On it comes, crushing, mangling, and flattening beneath its wheels, the bleeding bodies lying in the way. From this horrid car of fate, none can get away; none even attempt to escape. They are bound hand and foot, and laid down in its pathway, and when the time comes, the wheels will grind the poor wretches to powder! Well, I thank God, that while I believe in predestination, I know the difference between that and fate! Fate is predestination blind, demented, brainless, wandering about, achieving wondrous things without a purpose, overturning mountains, plucking up cedars by the roots, scattering firebrands, hurling deaths about, but all without an end. Such is fate—it is, because it must be—events occur, because they shall be. But predestination is a glorious thing. With many eyes it looks to the interests of God and His creatures, too, and although it says the thing must be, yet it must be because it is wise, and right, and just, and kind, that it should be! And though we may think that it comes to the same in the end, yet to our hearts the differences are as wide as the poles asunder. Believe not in fate, but believe in God! Say not, it was the man's destiny, but say, it is God's will! Say not, a cruel and irresistible fate has snatched him away, but say, a tender hand, finding that the due time was come, has taken him from evil to come!

These two suppositions being disposed of, there remains another. "Is there evil in a city, and the Lord has not done it?" If neither a foolish chance nor an unconscious fate has done it; perhaps the spirit of evil may have inflicted it. Perhaps Satan may bring evils upon us; perhaps *he* may drag down men to their graves; perhaps *he* may cut the thread of life; perhaps *he* is

the evil genius of the world, and the keeper of the gates of death! Brothers and sisters, we must get rid of the thought at once from our minds! Be gone far hence, foul King of Errors! You are the prince of the air, but you are not king of kings; nor are you now the king of death; the keys swing not at your belt; not from your black lips can come the summons, “Prepare to meet your doom.” Not with your foul fingers are we plucked from our houses and from our thrones; not through your cruelty are we given up to an ill and black day! Your despotic and tyrannical mind has no power to lord it over us! No, Jesus, You have vanquished Satan; You have delivered us from the very fear of death, because You have destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil. A thousand angels could not drag us to the grave; and *you*, black spirit, you shall not be able to confine us there, when once the trumpet of the archangel shall awaken us from our sleep! No, Satan has not done it! Look not on your troubles and trials, my brothers and sisters in Christ, as coming from hell. Satan may sometimes be the instrument of your pains, but still they come from God! In the cup of our sorrows, there is not a dreg which the Father did not put there; bitter as the compound may be, the eternal hand of wisdom mixed the whole! The rod may fall, but Satan does not wield it. Like, as a father “chastens his children,” so the Lord does chasten “those who fear Him.”

But once more—one more thought arises in our mind. Perhaps the greatest temptation of modern times is to impute everything which happens to the laws of nature. Now, this may satisfy philosophy, but theology goes a little further, and while it admits all the laws of matter, yet, it asserts that a law is in itself utterly powerless, apart from a power to carry it out! It may be a law, that such-and-such things shall be done, but, they never will be done, unless, there is some power to make the law effective. The notion of some in modern times seems to be that

this world is like a great clock wound up many years ago; in fact, there are some who believe in perpetual motion—and appear to teach that it wound itself up! In order to get rid of God, and send Him as far away as possible, they go back to primeval times, and conceive that then all the wheels were set in motion, and a sufficient quantity of momentum put into the whole affair, so that it is now going on of itself. As to divine interpositions, these they will not believe; miracles, of course, are absurd, and everything is left to the ordinary laws of nature, there being sufficient vitality, according to some, in the world itself to carry on its own acts, according to certain laws and rules. Blessed be God, we *know* that this is not true! We believe it is our duty to use every sanitary means to remove the seeds of disease; we believe that they err who would proclaim a fast over a plague, when it were better to sweep the streets; we think that they are wrong who only go to the prayer meeting when they had better go and pull down a row of dilapidated cottages and build better ones; we think that they are impractical and do not understand the Scriptures well, who would be on their knees when they ought to be on their feet and doing earnest work for man! But at the same time, we still have it that the Lord has done everything, and that these calamities come not except God puts forth His hand—that it is *His will* to remove men by death, and only by His will could they die. Why, that idea of leaving us all to machinery is an unhappy one to a man who can say, “*My Father*, my Father in heaven.” It is as if a child should be left without nurse or parent, but then there is a cradle which works by machinery, and rocks the child so many hours a day! When it is time for the child to wake, he is awakened by machinery; there is an engine ready to feed him; there is a contrivance prepared to take off his garments at night and an invention to put them on in the morning! He grows up, and whatever is to be done, has to be done by a machine—no love,

no father, no tender nurse, no kind and affectionate mother—he is the child of machines and wheels! And so, from year to year, he is passed on from one to another. When he comes up into life, he is still fed by a machine; he sleeps, he goes on his journeys; in everything that he does, he sees no living face, he feels no soft hands, he hears no loving tender voices; it is one clever piece of soulless, lifeless mechanism that accomplishes all!

Now, I bless God that is not the case with us. I cannot *see* my Father's hands; I thank Him I am fed, but I know *He* feeds me. I know the laws of nature contribute to preserve life, but I see the effects of His presence in my life, and I should feel like a sad and miserable orphan, with nothing that could find my heart's craving after a something to love, if I believed this world to be deserted of its God, and to have been going on with no Father near it to keep it in order, and to make it produce the results which he designed. Blessed be God, we have no doubt about our answer to the question! Even if there is evil in a city, the Lord has done it!

Let us pause a moment here and think. If, then, the Lord has done it, with what awe is every calamity invested? Standing by the royal deathbed, I thought I was in the presence of a prince, but lo, I see a man. It is *Your* work, O Most High! *You* have sealed those eyes in darkness! You have bid that heart cease its beatings, You, even You, have stretched the manly form in death. How near we are to God! Tread softly, as you go by that little room, where your infant's dead body lies yet unburied, for God is there, plucking the flower-bud, and appropriating it to Himself! You have had some trial yesterday. "Take off your shoes from your feet," for God is in that burning bush. Men see nothing but the calamity; the eyes of faith see God! We sometimes count it a matter of interest, if we hear, that such-and-such a departed worthy, slept in such-and-

such a room, or wrote in such-and-such a place. What shall we say, when we remember that *God* is there—that God is *here*—that while we wear these garments of sorrow, when we bowed our heads just now, and shed tears of sympathy, God was here Himself—the All-worker, the King of kings, the Lord of lords? Speak with bated breath; hush, and be silent; you are in the presence of Majesty! Let us think of national calamities or of private ills with that reverence which should be inspired by a consciousness of the presence of Deity.

And then, again, if God has done it, forever be put away all questions about its being right. It *must* be right! If any would reply, we would answer them in the curt phrase of Paul, “No, but O man, who are you that replies against God?” But, to take *him* away, and to remove him just in the hour of the nation’s perils—*can* this be right? Brothers and sisters, it *must* be! He has died at the best hour; the affliction has come at the most fitting season. It would have been wrong that it should have been otherwise; it would neither have been wise nor kind that he should have been spared. And this I gather from the fact that *God* has taken him away; and therefore, it must be most wise, best, most kind! Only say the same over all your losses. Though your dearest friend is removed, is hushed, is dumb with silence, and answers not, because *You* did it, even You, O God, therefore we say, “Your will be done.”

And this, too, shall be our best comfort. *God* has done it. What? Shall we weep for what *God* has done? Shall we sorrow when the Master has taken away what was His own? “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.” The gardener had a choice flower in his beds. One morning he missed it. He had tended it so carefully, that he looked upon it with the affection of a father to a child, and he hastily ran through the garden and sought out one of the servants, for he thought surely an enemy had plucked it, and he

said to him, “Who plucked that rose?” And the servant said, “I saw the master walking through the garden early this morning, when the sun was rising, and I saw him bear it away in his hand.” Then he that tended the rose said, “It is well; let him be blessed; it was his own; for him I held it; for him I nursed it; and if he has taken it, it is well.” So be it with your hearts! Feel that it is for the best that you have lost your friend, or that your best relation has departed. *God* has done it! Be filled with comfort; for what God has done can never be a proper argument for tears! Do you weep, you heavens, because God has veiled the stars; do you weep, O earth, because God has hidden the sun? What God has done is always ground for sonnet and for hallelujah! And even here, over the dead as yet unburied, our faith begins to sing its song—“It is well, ‘tis well; ‘tis for the best; and let the Lord’s name be praised now as always!”

II. I now only want your attention for a few minutes while I pass on to the second head. **IF GOD HAS DONE IT, HE HAS DONE IT WITH SOME DESIGN.**

It is not always proper for us to ask reasons for divine acts, for if He *gives* no account of His matters, we ought not to *ask* any account. That frivolous affectation of piety which leads even professedly Christians to call every affliction a judgment, and to consider that every person, who is suddenly taken away, dies as a judgment either upon him or others, I detest from my very soul! The infidel press usually lays hold upon this as being our weakest point. It is *not* our weakest point; we have nothing to do with it! Those who talk thus know nothing of their Bibles. They upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, do you think that they were worse sinners than others? I am utterly sick of the sanctimony of a portion of the religious world, when they raised a kind of miniature howl at me, when I said, and still repeat it, that an accident on a railway on Sunday is not a judgment, but happens in the common course of providence,

and that we are not to look for an immediate reason close at hand for any of these events! God's judgments are a vast deep; they are not that little shadow pool, to the bottom of which every fool's plummet may reach. God has some greater mystery in what He does than these, which every babe might discover. But, we draw a line between private calamities and national calamities. Nations have no future; hence the Judge of nations must chastise them here. For individuals, the punishment of sin is not in this world, but in the world to come; but nations will not rise as nations—they will rise as individuals, hence, when a death becomes a national calamity, it is fitting and proper to question, if we do not pry too deeply, as to why God has done it. Personally, the judgment is in the next world, and to each man the end of his career is to come there; but with nations I think there are judgments here, and that we would be wrong if we passed by the dealings of God, without hearing "the rod and Him that has appointed it."

Now, why has God been pleased to take away the Consort of our Queen?

I think, in the first place, we may see a motive for it in His thus giving a most solemn warning to all the kings and princes of the earth. Thus says Jehovah, King of kings, and Lord of lords—"Emperors and princes, you, too, shall die like men. Let not your crowns seem to you eternal; there is but one King, immortal, invisible. Think not, when you stretch your scepters over nations, that yours is an Almighty arm; your arm shall drop the rod; your head shall lose its crown; your purple shall give place to the shroud, and your palace shall be the narrow limits of the tomb." The dead from their graves are crying—

"Princes! This clay must be your bed
In spite of all your towers!
The tall, the mighty, and majestic head

Must lie as low as ours.”

You will say, “But why not remove a common and ordinary person?” Because it would not have that effect. You, God, have spoken from the castle where the flag, half elevated, hung out the sign of sorrow, and You have said to princes who *must* hear, and to Czars who *must* listen, “I am God, and beside Me there is none else. As for you, you kings, your breath is in your nostrils; men of high degree are vanity; wherein are you to be accounted of?” We, the multitude, can hear sermons every day when we see our fellows and our equals removed from us by death; but, these high and lofty ones sit up in their state like the gods in high Olympus, and if there were not death in their ranks, they might write themselves down as demigods, and demand worship at our hands! Stained is your pride, O empire! Your escutcheon is marred and blotted; for Death, the herald, has challenged the royalty of emperors and kings, and dashed down, once and for all, his gauntlet in defiance of the princes of the earth. You shall sleep like your serfs and slaves; you shall die like your subjects! Xerxes has passed away, as well as the millions he led to slaughter. And so, you mighty ones, must you find that Death advances with equal foot to the palace of the king—as to the cottage of the poor!

More than this—who can tell how many a heart that had been careless in our court, and thoughtless among our lords, may be made to consider? If anything can do it, this must. They who have been dazzled with the brightness of splendor, and have lost their thought amidst the noise of pomp, will hear, for once, a sermon by a preacher whom they dare not despise; for *God* will say to them, “Courtiers! Noblemen! Peers! I have taken away your head from you; prepare to meet your God!” And, it may be, that today, there are knees bowed in prayer which never bowed before, and eyes may weep for sin, as well as for

death today, and hearts may be breaking with a consciousness of guilt, as well as with a sense of loss. It is hard for the rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven, thus Providence attempts to make it easy. It is not easy to get the ear of those who are thus immersed in the ordinary gaieties and cares of Court life; but this detains them, death holds the wedding guests, while with his lean and skinny hand uplifted, he tells out the tale, and makes them hear, and checks and keeps them till the story is done! It may be that God intends to bring out for this our age, some who shall stand towards the Church of God today, as Lady Huntingdon and Ann Erskine did to the Church a hundred years ago! It may be He is tutoring some women today who, like Anne of Bohemia, the friend of the Reformers, may become promoters of the gospel of Christ; and those who otherwise might have been strangers, may come to lend their influence and their power to the promotion of real godliness, and the vital interests of men.

I think these are not unreasonable things to say. We *may* see that God has His purpose here. Besides, I think today God has spoken to us as a people. He has shown to us our entire dependence upon Him. He can take away every Prince and every Noble, every Cabinet Minister, and every Privy Councilor; He can leave this nation like a ship dismasted; He can, if He so wills, take the hand from the helm, and let her be drifted out to sea, and there she may be encompassed with the clouds of war and the lightning of judgment, and all our State may suffer wreck like Nineveh and Babylon of old. Britain! God has blessed you, but remember, it is your God. England! God has honored you; but forget not the God who keeps you! O nation, too apt to become proud of your own strength, now that you are today wrapped about with sackcloth, and the ashes are on your head, bow and say, “God is God alone; the shields of the

mighty belong unto Him, and unto Him, and unto Him alone, be glory and honor, forever and ever.”

Then, He has spoken to each of us as individuals. I hear a voice which says to me, “Preacher! Be instant in season and out of season; be up and doing, earnest and fervent, for your day is short, and your time shall soon be over.” I hear a voice which says to you, officers of the Church, “Be diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; for soon shall the pallor of death overtake you, and he shall lay his chill hand upon your hoary heads, and stretch you in the cold grave.” I hear a voice which speaks to the people of my charge—the members of this Christian Church—“Work while it is called today, for the night comes wherein no man can work.” And I hear a solemn note, ringing as a funeral bell to you who are unconverted, and I translate its message thus—“Prepare to meet your God, you careless ones, who are at ease; make ready, for He comes; you thoughtless ones, who give yourselves no trouble about eternity, make ready, for He comes! Drunkard, you who are a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God, make ready, for He comes; swearer, blasphemer, if there is such a one here, make ready, for *He* comes; He comes whom you have blasphemed; and each one of you, if you are out of Christ, if your sins still lie upon you, if you have never sought and found absolution from the lips of God your Father, seek it, seek it, for He comes!” When at the battle of Balaclava, the troop of soldiers rode into the valley of death, it must have been a frightful thing to see your comrades reel in the saddle and fall back; to hear bullet after bullet whistling about one’s ears; and shots finding their mark in one’s companions; to see the road strewn with bodies, and the ranks so continually riddled and thinned. And what has been the life of many of us but such a charge as that? Companions of our boyhood, where are you? Friends of our youth, how many of you have fallen? And the gray-haired sire,

as he looks back, can say, “How few survive of all I once new! How many have gone! What multitudes have fallen in the valley of decision!”

And *we* stand miracles of long-suffering; *we* stand monuments of mercy! Must not our turn soon come? Must not our turn soon come, I say? Have we a lease of our lives? Can we postpone the dread moment? Can we hope to live long when the whole of the longest life is short? Let us prepare, for tomorrow may see our coffin measured; tomorrow may behold us ready for our grave clothes! No, *tonight* the setting sun may set upon our dead bodies. I do beseech you, remember that you are mortal. Remember by this solemn drapery of woe, and by the garment of your sorrow, that soon *you* must be wept over; soon mourners shall go about the streets for *you*, and *you* shall go to your long homes! I am addressing some of you this morning that awake my most tender anxieties. You have been to hear this voice before, some of you, and you have trembled; but your strong passions are too much for you. You have said, “Go your way; when I have a more convenient season, I will send for you.” And that convenient season has not come yet. You *would* be saved, but you *must* be damned! You have longings after life at times, but the cravings of that old lust, that old habit of drunkenness, that old vice, those old corruptions, come, and you go back like dogs to your vomit, and like sows that were washed, to your wallowing in the mire! I speak to some this morning, who have trembled in this house, when they heard the Word preached, and they have gone home, and they have felt solemnly impressed for a little while; but they have put the angel of mercy from them; they have despised their own salvation! Well, you shall do it but a few times more; you shall despise your own souls but a few more days, and then you shall know, on your deathbeds, that we have not lied to you, but have spoken to you God’s truth! May God convince

you of that, before you discover it too late, when the judgment shall sit, and your body, together reunited, shall stand before the judgment seat!

Feeble as my words may be, they will be a sad part of the account that you *were* warned to think on your latter end, and to turn to God! Oh, by death and all its terrors, if unaccompanied by faith—by resurrection, and the horrors it shall increase, if you shall perish unforgiven—by the judgment and its tremendous pomp—by the sentence and its eternal certainty—by the punishment and its everlasting agony— by time and eternity—by death and the grave—by heaven and by hell—by God and by the wounds of the Savior—awake, you sleeping ones! Awake, before you sleep the sleep of death! The way of salvation is again proclaimed. “Whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ has everlasting life.” “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” On yonder cross He pours out His blood a sacrifice. Trust your soul with Him, and He will save you; put it in His hands, and He will keep it, and at the last He will be answerable for your soul, and He will present it “without spot or wrinkle or any such thing,” before the throne of God, even the Father! May the Lord follow with His blessing what has been said, and to Him shall be glory.